

Tab 8

Report on the Study of Missouri's Academic Program Approval Process

Coordinating Board for Higher Education
June 4, 2025

BACKGROUND

Section 173.005.2(1), RSMo, grants the Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE) the authority to approve, not approve, or provisionally approve proposed new degree programs offered by public institutions of higher education. The process for academic program approvals has been codified in 6 CSR 10-4.010 and was last amended in 2018.

The current rule language is outdated and includes some conflicting terminology that can create confusion for institutions. In May 2024, department staff proposed to Ed.D. students at Vanderbilt University that an evaluation of the review process be performed as a potential graduate-level capstone project.

CURRENT STATUS

During the 2024-2025 academic year, department staff have worked with Vanderbilt doctoral students Kelsey Johansen, Lindsey Koch, and Allen Mullis on the evaluation of the academic program review process (report in Attachment A). The report recommends:

- Creating collaborative frameworks through establishing a regional coordination council and structured information sharing between institutions
- Streamlining processes through the provision of resources for navigating submission approaches that expedite workforce-aligned programs
- Enhancing data integration by developing a comprehensive dashboard connecting outcomes
- Establishing continuous improvement mechanisms including regular policy review cycles and feedback channels

NEXT STEPS

Department staff will share the report and its findings with interested stakeholders and will use the recommendations to begin crafting changes to the Academic Program Approval rule at 6 CSR 10-4.010. Staff also will review and make changes to rules that reference or are impacted by the academic program approval rule, such as Standards for Establishing Residence Centers rule at 6 CSR 10-6.020 and Funding for Off-Campus and Out-of-District Instructional Sites rule at 6 CSR 10-6.030.

RECOMMENDATION

This is an information item only.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A: Modernizing Missouri's Academic Program Management: Balancing Statewide Oversight and Responsiveness



Modernizing Missouri's Academic Program Management

Balancing Statewide Oversight and Responsiveness

Kelsey Johansen | Lindsey Koch | Allen Mullis

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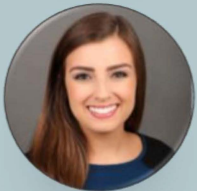
This project was enriched by the institutional support and resources provided by Vanderbilt University's Department of Leadership, Policy, and Organizations, without which this study would not have been possible.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Challenge

Missouri's higher education system faces critical challenges in aligning academic programs with evolving workforce demands and student needs. The current academic program approval process, while designed to ensure quality, has become a barrier to innovation with:

- Multi-layered processes creating 12-36-month bottlenecks
- Limited access to integrated workforce and program performance data
- Tension between regulatory oversight and institutional innovation in a changing economy

Key Findings

Through 17 stakeholder interviews, comparative analysis of academic program practices across eight neighboring states, and exploration of existing program data to demonstrate potential evaluation frameworks, we identified four interconnected challenges.

- **Process Complexity:** Missouri's three-tiered approval process creates inconsistent new academic program implementation timelines up to 36 months, far exceeding neighboring states' 3-6-month average.
- **Data Integration Barriers:** Stakeholders report significant challenges accessing workforce data and utilizing cross-institutional enrollment patterns for decision-making.
- **Limited Collaboration:** In contrast to Missouri stakeholder interview findings, external state agencies place an emphasis encouraging collaboration and the exchange of ideas between institutions.
- **Oversight Balance:** Comprehensive reviews for programs outside institutional missions often create delays without clear evaluation metrics.

Strategic Recommendations

- **Create Collaborative Frameworks** through regional coordination councils and structured information sharing between institutions.
- **Streamline Processes** through the provision of resources for navigating submission approaches that expedite workforce-aligned programs.
- **Enhance Data Integration** by developing a comprehensive dashboard connecting outcomes.
- **Establish Continuous Improvement Mechanisms** including regular policy review cycles and feedback channels.

Implementing these evidence-based recommendations would better position Missouri to achieve its goal of 60% educational attainment by 2030 (Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, 2021); while ensuring that academic programs effectively serve students, communities, and employers in a rapidly evolving economy.

INTRODUCTION

Missouri's higher education system faces critical challenges in creating a responsive and efficient academic program approval process. The current system is characterized by complex multi-layered processes that create significant barriers to innovation and workforce alignment. Colleges struggle with new program implementation with timelines that can extend from 12 to 36 months, limited access to integrated workforce and program performance data, insufficient cross-institutional collaboration, and ongoing tension between regulatory oversight and institutional responsiveness.

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (MDHEWD) seeks to balance thorough program oversight with the need for agile, mission-driven program development. This study examines the current academic program approval and review processes across Missouri's 27 public institutions to identify opportunities for strategic improvement.

By analyzing stakeholder perspectives, practices of neighboring states, and program performance data, we aim to develop recommendations that will streamline approval processes, enhance data integration, foster institutional collaboration, and create more responsive academic program development in Missouri.

As the economic landscape continues to evolve rapidly, the state must develop a more dynamic approach to academic program approval that can quickly respond to workforce needs while maintaining rigorous quality standards. Our comprehensive analysis reveals the complex challenges within the current system and provides strategies to transform academic program approval from a bureaucratic hurdle into a strategic tool for educational and economic development in Missouri.



University of Central Missouri

BACKGROUND

State and Institutional Context

Missouri, known as the “Show Me State”, is in the midwestern United States and covers more than 68,700 square miles with a population of over 6.1 million citizens (Learn About Missouri, n.d., U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Recent U.S. Census Bureau data shows that 41.9% of the state’s 25 years of age and older population has at least a postsecondary associate’s, bachelor’s, or graduate/professional degree (n.d.). Missouri’s higher education landscape includes 13 public four-year universities, 14 public two-year colleges, 24 independent colleges and universities, and more than 150 proprietary and specialized institutions (Department of Higher

Education and Workforce Development, n.d.). For fiscal year 2023, the total enrollment in Missouri’s public and independent colleges and universities was 315,189 students (Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, 2024).

The Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE) oversees this diverse postsecondary education ecosystem (Statutory Responsibilities, n.d.). Responsible for supporting the state’s postsecondary institutions, the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (MDHEWD) reports to the Coordinating Board for Higher Education (About MDHEWD, n.d., para. 3). Through the state’s Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE) authority, MDHEWD is responsible for reviewing and approving academic programs, ensuring that they align with institutional missions, state workforce needs, and quality standards (Statutory Responsibilities, n.d.). With its current mission “To put Missourians on a path to learn, work, and prosper,” MDHEWD plays a crucial role in shaping the state’s educational landscape and workforce development (About MDHEWD, n.d.).

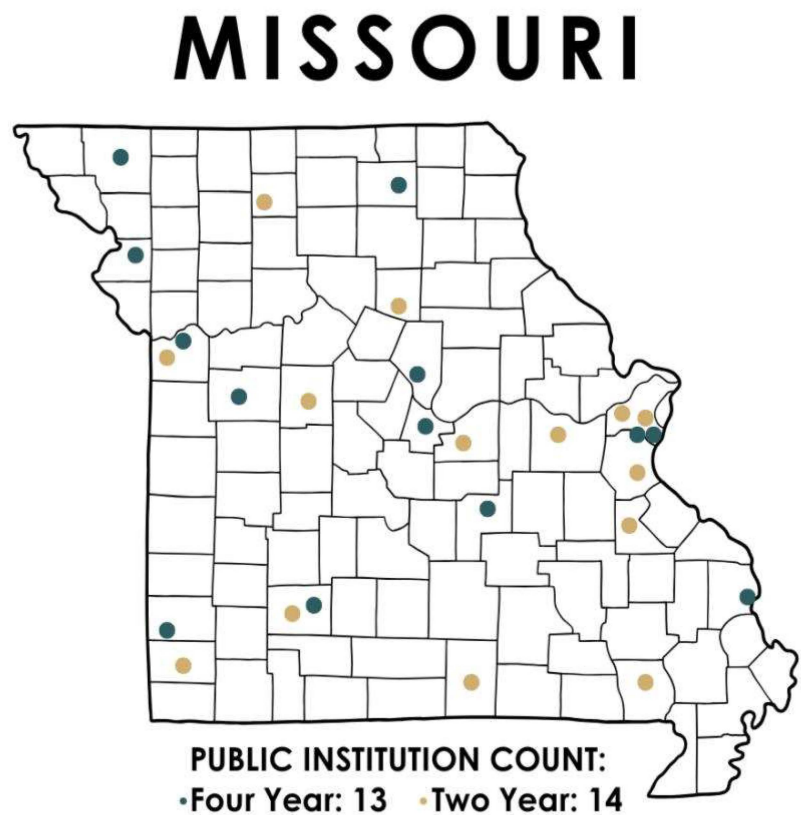


Figure 1: Missouri Map of Public Institutions

Missouri's Academic Program Approval and Review Process

Missouri's academic program approval and review process is overseen by the CBHE and supported by the MDHEWD. The State's legislature codified the postsecondary academic program approval and review to "establish the criteria for evaluation and procedures for submitting new degree and certificate programs and program changes" for both public and independent institutions of higher education (Academic Program Approval, 2023). The current MDHEWD administrative rule establishes three types of academic program review processes:

- **Staff Review** is related to minor changes to existing academic programs, such as inactive status, program removal, change of program title, certificate programs, program options (adding or removing), change of address notification, or closed notification.
- **Routine Review** process is for new academic programs proposals that fall within the institution's CBHE-approved mission¹ and geographic region it is intended to serve, builds on existing programs and faculty experience, and that costs to implement will be minimal and absorbable within the institution's current budget.
- **Comprehensive Review** process is required for several scenarios including new programs that are outside of the CBHE-approved mission of the proposing institution, programs that are Engineering-related, the program is a doctoral degree or a professional degree and is a non-University of Missouri system institution, or the proposed program is an educational specialist degree.

The administrative rule also provides definitions for terms related to these review processes (see Appendix B). Postsecondary institutions in Missouri submit their academic program approval request and documentation to the MDHEWD Academic Affairs division within the Office of Postsecondary Policy via an online portal (Academic Affairs, n.d.; Academic Program Actions Web Portal Instructions, n.d.). The MDHEWD administrative rule outlines a stringent one-month "process, review, and report back to institutions" from the department for Staff and Routine Academic Program Review submissions if received by the first of the month (Academic Program Approval, 2023, pgs. 4-5). Submissions that meet one of six criteria (scenarios) related to the Comprehensive Review process must be received by July 1 each year (Academic Program Approval, 2023). The CBHE "will determine which proposals to evaluate" and "announce its decision(s) in September" with "final decisions to approve any programs routed through this review practice by February" (Academic Program Approval, 2023, p. 7).

¹A description of the Missouri public institution's programs, audiences served, level and type of degrees offered, or other distinguishing factors, which the CBHE has reviewed and approved.

New academic programs that are approved by the CBHE through either the Routine Review or Comprehensive Review processes must be implemented within two years of the provisional approved status. Otherwise, the CBHE provisional approval will expire, and the institution must resubmit their proposal (Academic Program Approval, 2023). Once the new program has been implemented, it is placed on a “5-year provisional approval status” with the CBHE and must meet performance targets set forth by the implementing institution (Academic Program Approval, 2023). Upon the end of the 5-year provisional approval status, the CBHE can decide if the new program’s provisional approval should be “unconditional”, “remain provisional” for two more years, or be “terminated” (Academic Program Approval, 2023, pgs., 6-7). Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the MDHEWD’s Administrative Rule for new academic program approvals. For existing academic programs, the CBHE has authority under Missouri state statute to recommend the consolidation or elimination of programs or degree offerings (Coordinating Board for Higher Education - Additional Responsibilities, 2014).

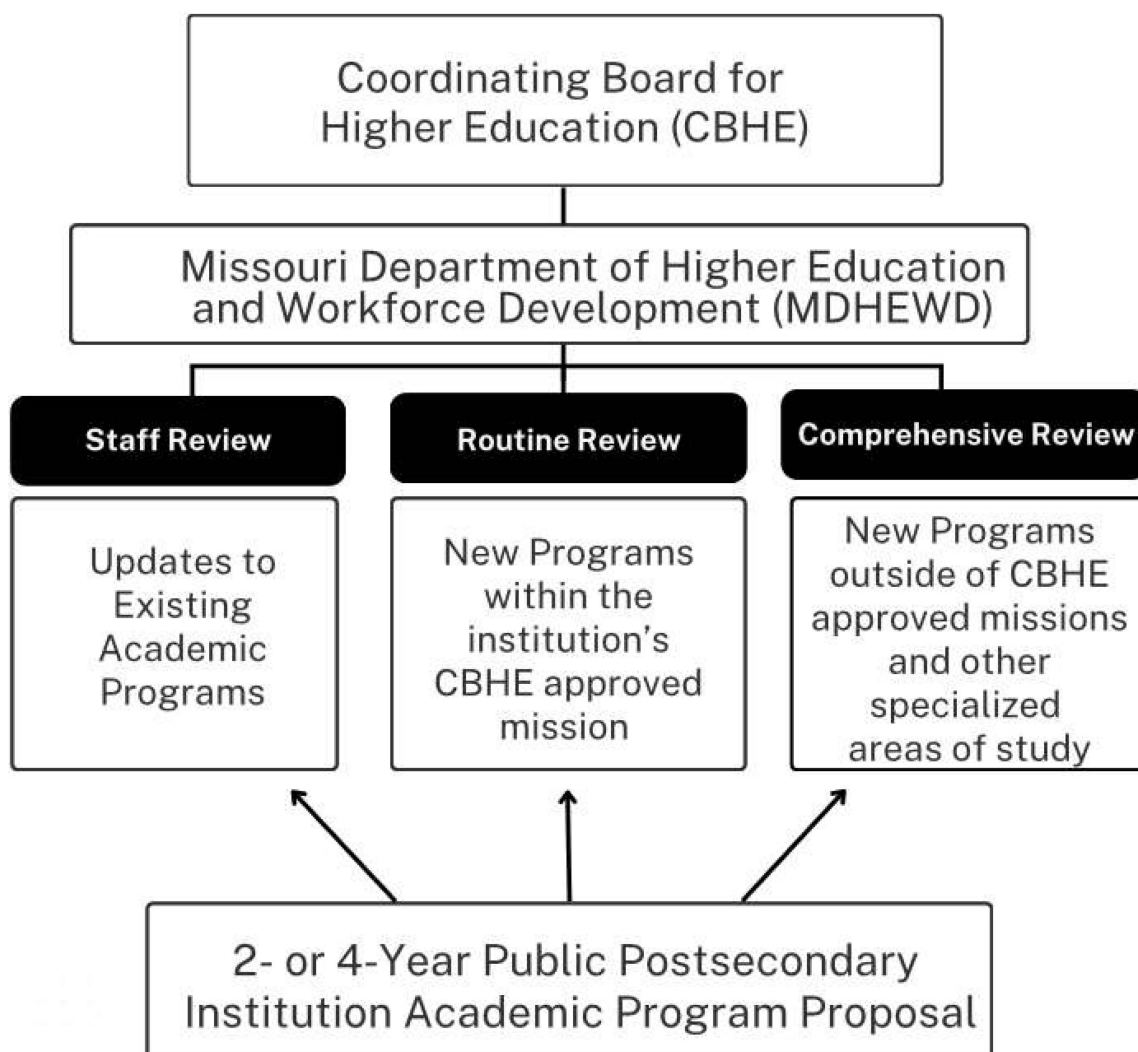


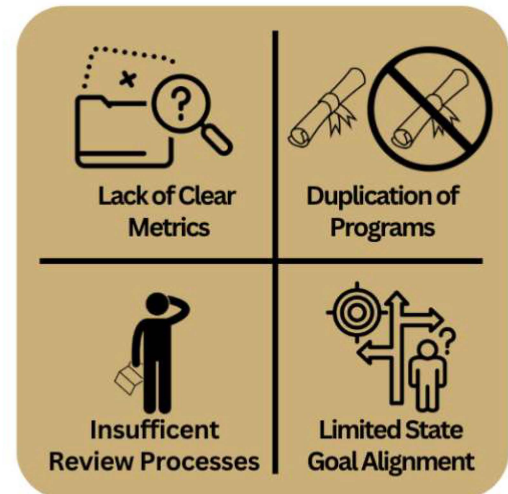
Figure 2: MDHEWD's New Academic Program Routing Flow for 2- and 4-year Public Institution

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (MDHEWD) seeks to develop a more strategic and responsive approach to academic program approval and review. At the core of this initiative is a fundamental challenge: how to create an academic program approval and review process that effectively balances state-level oversight with institutional innovation while meeting the dynamic needs of Missouri's evolving educational and economic landscape.

The department's primary objectives are clear and multifaceted. MDHEWD aims to create a process that effectively balances state-level oversight with institutional innovation, addressing several key challenges in the current system:

- Lack of clear metrics for evaluating program viability, financial sustainability, and student success
- Potential program duplication between regional institutions
- Insufficient processes for reviewing and approving non-degree programs like certificates
- Limited ability to align programs with state goals while maintaining institutional autonomy



The department desires to establish a more coordinated state-level approach to academic program approval and review that ensures:

- Programs align with state educational and workforce goals
- Utilizes limited resources wisely
- Provides clear metrics for evaluating program viability
- Supports institution flexibility and innovation
- Creates a transparent and easily navigable approval process.

MDHEWD recognizes the need to modernize its academic program approval system to address emerging challenges. The challenges facing the department extend beyond simple administrative processes. They represent a broader tension between maintaining academic quality, supporting institutional autonomy, and responding to the state's economic development needs.

The primary purpose of this study is to support MDHEWD's strategic objective of developing a more efficient and responsive academic program approval process. By conducting a comprehensive review of current practices, the project aims to provide actionable recommendations that will transform the approval and review system from a bureaucratic hurdle into a strategic tool for educational and economic development.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study examines Missouri's academic program approval process to understand how the state can enhance its approach. Our research questions explore how Missouri can improve its academic program approval process and viability assessment to better align with stakeholder needs, regional practices, key performance indicators, workforce demands, and student needs.

To explore this complex issue, we examine three interconnected research questions:

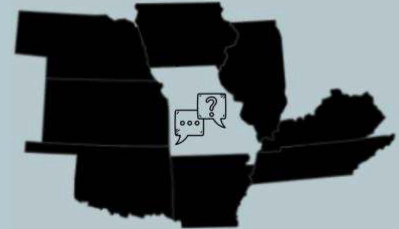
Research Question 1:

How do stakeholders describe their experience with Missouri's academic program approval and review processes?



Research Question 2:

How do higher education governing and coordinating boards in Missouri's eight neighboring states approach their academic program approval and review processes?



Research Question 3:

How can data-informed insights inform Missouri's academic program approval criteria and evaluation methods?



The research findings will provide evidence-based recommendations for optimizing these processes. By identifying opportunities to create collaborative frameworks, streamline processes, enhance data integration, and establish continuous improvement mechanisms, the study aims to better position Missouri to achieve its goal of 60% educational attainment by 2030 while ensuring academic programs effectively serve students, communities, and employers in a rapidly evolving economy (Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Academic program approval and review processes serve as critical mechanisms for quality assurance, resource allocation, and strategic alignment in public higher education systems and institutions. These processes operate within complex governance structures that must balance institutional autonomy with public accountability (Berdahl, 1971; Ness et al., 2021). This literature review synthesizes theoretical frameworks, historical developments, and best practices most relevant to Missouri's efforts to optimize its academic program approval and review processes.

The fundamental tension between institutional autonomy and state oversight has historically shaped program approval and review processes. As higher education faces intensifying demands for efficiency, workforce alignment, and demonstrated outcomes, these processes have evolved from simple duplication prevention to sophisticated, multi-dimensional assessment systems (Kelchen, 2018). Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing a program approval framework that serves Missouri's educational, economic, and social priorities.

Theoretical Frameworks

Principal-Agent Theory

Principal-agent theory illuminates the complex relationship between state higher education agencies (principals) and institutions (agents) in program oversight (Lane & Kivisto, 2008). This framework explains why states establish accountability mechanisms to ensure institutions act in accordance with state priorities despite information asymmetries and potentially divergent goals.

Ness et al. (2021) apply this theory specifically to state authorization processes, viewing program approval as a "contract" between state agencies and institutions. Their research reveals how state agencies often occupy dual roles, acting as principals to institutions while simultaneously serving as agents to state governments. This dual position creates complex incentive structures that influence the stringency and effectiveness of program approval and review processes. The principal-agent lens helps explain why program approval processes often embody tensions between compliance verification and genuine quality improvement.

Resource Dependence Theory

Resource dependence theory explains how institutions strategically develop and maintain academic programs in response to funding environments (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). As Jaquette and Curs (2015) demonstrate, declining state appropriations increasingly drive institutions to prioritize market-oriented programs with stronger revenue potential, sometimes at the expense of other institutional priorities.

This theoretical perspective helps explain several patterns evident in our Missouri findings: the pressure on institutions to develop “high-demand” programs despite resource constraints, the strategic use of program types (certificates vs. degrees) to test market viability, and the concern about program viability expressed by stakeholders. Effective program approval systems must acknowledge these resource dependencies while ensuring that economic pressures don’t compromise educational quality or institutional mission.

Organizational Learning and Continuous Improvement

Effective program review processes facilitate organizational learning by closing feedback loops between assessment and decision-making. Banta and Blaich (2011) found that while institutions readily collect assessment data, they frequently struggle to close the “assessment loop” by translating findings into meaningful improvements. The authors identified several barriers to effective use of program review information, including siloed organizational structures, insufficient leadership support, and evaluation systems designed for compliance rather than improvement.

This framework directly addresses key findings from our Missouri stakeholder interviews, highlighting a disconnect between program approval and ongoing program review. As several stakeholders noted, Missouri’s approval process operates largely separately from its periodic review of existing programs, limiting opportunities for organizational learning. A more integrated approach would facilitate what Mets (1995) calls the “learning orientation” in program governance: systematic reflection on outcomes that informs future program development and refinement. Hoare et al. (2022) propose a learning community approach to program review that embeds organizational learning principles by creating protected time and space for faculty discussion, ensuring access to needed information, and distributing responsibility for decision-making.

Policy Diffusion and Implementation

McLendon et al. (2005) found that states were 44% more likely to adopt higher education policies implemented by neighboring states, demonstrating the powerful effect of regional influence. Program approval practices spread between states through specific diffusion mechanisms identified by Shipan and Volden (2008): learning (seeking successful models), competition (responding to economic pressure), imitation (copying prestigious states), and coercion (responding to external mandates).

This diffusion framework explains patterns we observed in our comparative analysis of Missouri’s neighboring states, which revealed similar approval criteria, shared emphasis on workforce alignment, and common challenges in implementation. It also suggests opportunities for Missouri to learn from successful approaches in surrounding states. However, Mooney (2001) found that regional effects vary over time, with neighboring examples particularly influential during early implementation but potentially less relevant as programs mature. This finding reinforces the importance of continuously adapting rather than simply adopting practices from surrounding states.

Program Evaluation Models and Frameworks

Multi-Dimensional Assessment Approaches

Michael (1998) established a comprehensive program evaluation typology that remains relevant today, categorizing seven approaches. **Cost models** analyze financial efficiency through comparative and cost-benefit analyses, addressing stakeholder concerns about program sustainability. **Quality models** assess educational standards through learning outcomes and academic rigor. **Market models** evaluate student demand and competitive positioning, while employment models analyze workforce alignment and graduate placement, both areas where Missouri lacked systematic methods for data collection and analysis.

Political models consider stakeholder interests within funding contexts, while **academic models** emphasize faculty-led collaborative decision-making. Finally, **eclectic models** combine multiple approaches, connecting to Atkins' (2022) *Start, Stop, or Grow* framework that similarly balances mission-alignment, quality, demand, and sustainability. This typology supports developing a more comprehensive evaluation framework rather than relying on isolated metrics like program duplication or projected enrollment.

Data-Informed Frameworks

The literature strongly supports multi-dimensional frameworks for program evaluation rather than single-metric approaches. Atkins' (2022) *Start, Stop, or Grow* model has emerged as a leading framework, organizing program assessment across four key dimensions: **mission alignment** (how well programs align with institutional and state objectives), **academic quality** (program rigor and student success metrics), **market demand** (student enrollment and workforce needs), and **financial sustainability** (resource utilization and fiscal viability). Research by Mathies (2018) demonstrates that this balanced approach prevents over-reliance on any single metric and accommodates the complexity of program performance assessment.

Atkins' Start Stop Grow Model

Mission Alignment

- Program Coordination with institutional & state objectives

Academic Quality

- Program Rigor
- Student Success Metrics

Market Demand

- Student Enrollment
- Workforce Needs

Financial Sustainability

- Resource Utilization
- Fiscal Viability

Atkins, 2022

Data Integration Best Practices

Studies on effective program evaluation consistently emphasize integrated data systems that connect multiple metrics. Kuh et al. (2018) found that institutions with integrated data systems identified struggling programs 2-3 years earlier than those using siloed approaches. Key integration practices include **standardized program identifiers** (consistent program coding across systems), **longitudinal**

tracking (connecting student data from enrollment through employment), and **contextual benchmarking** (comparing programs to appropriate peer groups).

Hora et al. (2020) documented those institutions effectively connecting program-specific data with workforce outcomes achieved significantly better alignment between academic offerings and economic needs. States implementing these integration practices reported 15-20% improvements in workforce alignment measures.

Visualization and Communication Approaches

Effective data utilization extends beyond collection to presentation and communication. Few (2013) established that purposeful data visualization significantly improves pattern recognition and decision-making. Best practices include **interactive dashboards** allowing stakeholders to explore data from multiple perspectives, **comparative visualization** directly comparing programs to relevant benchmarks, and **trend highlighting**, emphasizing changes over time rather than point-in-time metrics.

Blaich and Wise (2015) demonstrated that institutions implementing these visualization approaches saw substantial increases in data utilization for program improvement, with faculty and administrators reporting 30-40% greater confidence in data-informed decisions.

Regional Context Consideration

Research consistently emphasizes the importance of **regional economic context** in program evaluation. Hillman and Weichman (2016) found that program outcomes often vary significantly by region due to economic factors rather than program quality. States address this by implementing **regional benchmarking** (comparing programs to those in similar economic contexts), **labor market segmentation** (analyzing employment outcomes within relevant geographic areas), and **contextual interpretation** (considering regional factors when interpreting performance metrics).

Kinzie et al. (2021) found that states incorporating regional context into program evaluation demonstrated more nuanced decision-making and more effectively addressed workforce needs in underserved areas.

Early Warning Systems

Emerging research highlights the value of early warning systems that identify struggling programs before completion and employment data becomes available. Swing and Ross (2016) identified several effective early indicators: **first-year persistence** (term-to-term retention in first year), **gateway course success** (completion rates in foundational courses), and **enrollment trends** (patterns relative to projections and historical data).

States implementing formal early warning systems reported identifying 70-80% of underperforming programs within the first two years of operation, allowing for earlier intervention and resource alignment.

Historical Development and Current Practices

The data-informed frameworks discussed above represent the evolution of program evaluation approaches that have developed alongside the historical changes in state oversight systems. As states moved from simple duplication prevention to more sophisticated accountability frameworks, these data-integration practices have become increasingly central to effective program governance.

Evolution of Program Approval Systems

- **Emergence of State Coordination (1950s-1970s):** As Berdahl (1971) documented, states established coordinating and governing boards primarily to prevent unnecessary duplication and manage rapid growth. Barak and Berdahl (1971) found that by 1975, 47 state boards had program approval authority, representing a 105% increase since 1960. This historical context helps explain Missouri's initial focus on preventing duplication and maintaining institutional mission boundaries.
- **Accountability Movement (1980s-1990s):** The accountability era introduced more formalized review processes with standardized criteria and cyclical schedules (Barak, 1982). Creamer and Janosik (1999) identified emerging models ranging from self-regulating approaches (institution-controlled) to externally regulated systems (government-controlled). This period established the compliance orientation that still influences Missouri's approval process.
- **Performance Funding and Strategic Alignment (2000s-2010s):** Program approval became increasingly linked to performance metrics and workforce goals (McLendon et al., 2006). Missouri's current emphasis on workforce alignment reflects this historical shift toward viewing higher education as an economic development engine.
- **Data-Informed Decision-Making (2010s-Present):** Recent developments emphasize integrated data systems connecting education and workforce outcomes (Armstrong et al., 2019). By 2018, 47 states were linking K-12 and higher education data, while 51 states were connecting education with workforce information—creating opportunities for more sophisticated program evaluation. Missouri's P20W system represents this evolution but remains underutilized in program approval decisions.

Governance Structure Impacts

Ness et al. (2021) developed a classification system for state authorization processes that helps contextualize Missouri's approach. They identified four distinct approaches:

1. **Protective Approach** (high centralization + high stringency): Most common mode (19 states), featuring centralized oversight and strict standards.
2. **Measured Approach** (low centralization + high stringency): Professional oversight with distributed authority but rigorous standards.

Independent **Protective**

Degree of Centralization (0-8)

Autonomous **Measured**

Stringency (0-82 Scale)

Legend:

- ◆ MHEC
- NEBHE
- SREB
- ▲ WICHE

States labeled on the plot: SD, MT, MI, ME, ID, CA, ND, UT, TX, HI, IN, MS, VT, AL, CO, AR, NM, IA, KS, TN, VA, NH, CT, AK, MN, FL, LA, SC, PA, RI, MO, GA, IL, OR, DC, KY, WV, NJ, WA, NV, OH, MA, NC, OK, WI, AZ.

Best Practices in Program Approval and Review

Leading states implement tiered review processes that vary requirements based on program risk and institutional capacity. McGuinness (2016) documents "earned autonomy" models that grant greater flexibility to high-performing institutions while maintaining intensive oversight for struggling programs or high-risk proposals. This approach addresses a key tension in Missouri's process: the need to maintain quality standards while reducing the administrative burden for low-risk program proposals.

Differentiated models typically establish clear criteria for determining review pathways—specific factors like resource requirements, mission alignment, and duplication potential that trigger different levels of scrutiny. This practice directly informed our recommendation for more explicit differentiation within Missouri's existing three-tier review system (Staff, Routine, and Comprehensive).

Integrated Data Systems

Armstrong et al. (2019) document the evolution of state **postsecondary data systems**, highlighting dramatic improvements in data integration. By 2018, 32 states could link data across K-12, postsecondary, and workforce sectors—enabling comprehensive analysis of program outcomes from enrollment through employment. These systems support program approval by providing evidence of workforce alignment, student outcomes, and return on investment.

However, strong data systems alone do not ensure effective decision-making. As our Missouri findings revealed, stakeholders struggle to access and interpret available workforce data. Effective systems must not only integrate data but make it accessible through user-friendly interfaces and analytical tools.

Collaborative Governance Models

Effective program approval systems **engage diverse stakeholders in structured collaboration**. Ly (2021) found concerning trends in faculty governance, with only 31% of institutions reporting faculty primacy in establishing new academic programs—a significant decrease from previous surveys. This finding underscores the importance of intentional faculty involvement in approval processes.

Hoare et al. (2022) propose a **structured approach to collaborative program review** that includes internal teams, cross-disciplinary cohorts, administrative leadership, and technical support. This model shifts from **transactional compliance** to **relational improvement**, creating space for diverse voices in the program approval process. Such collaborative approaches directly address stakeholders' concerns about siloed decision-making and limited coordination between institutions in Missouri's current system.

Implications for Missouri

This literature informs five strategic opportunities for academic program approval and review, beyond the approval process itself:

- **Governance Refinement:** Evaluating Missouri's approach against Ness et al.'s (2021) classification system reveals opportunities to maintain coordinating board oversight while reducing unnecessary bureaucracy through clearer criteria and differentiated pathways.
- **Multi-Dimensional Evaluation:** Michael's (1998) typology supports our recommendation to expand beyond duplication concerns toward a more comprehensive assessment framework

incorporating quality, market, employment, and financial metrics—aligned with Atkins' (2022) Start, Stop, or Grow model.

- **Data Integration:** Armstrong et al.'s (2019) research on state data systems suggests Missouri can leverage its P20W infrastructure more effectively through user-friendly interfaces, visualization tools, and analytical frameworks that make workforce data more accessible to program planners.
- **Collaborative Structures:** Hoare et al.'s (2022) learning community model offers a template for strengthening stakeholder engagement through structured collaboration between institutions, employers, and state agencies—directly addressing the siloed decision-making identified in our findings.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Banta and Blach's (2011) research on closing the assessment loop supports our recommendation for stronger connections between initial approval and ongoing program review, creating feedback mechanisms that support organizational learning.

By synthesizing these evidence-based practices, Missouri can develop a more efficient, effective program approval system that balances necessary oversight with institutional innovation, ensures educational quality while responding to workforce needs, and reduces administrative burden while strengthening accountability for outcomes.

Conceptual Framework

Our study builds on Atkins' (2022) Start, Stop, or Grow model, which evaluates academic programs across four dimensions: mission alignment, academic quality, market demand, and financial sustainability. This framework directly addresses the tension we discovered in Missouri's program approval process: the balance between oversight and autonomy, thoroughness versus responsiveness, standardization versus innovation, and institutional competition versus collaboration.

The logic model (Appendix A) we developed translates this theoretical foundation into a practical roadmap, connecting our research inputs and activities to concrete outcomes. By mapping relationships between resources, processes, and results, we can identify specific intervention points to improve Missouri's program approval system. Our approach recognizes that effective program decisions should be data-informed rather than data-driven—an important distinction as Missouri works to develop more sophisticated metrics for program evaluation while maintaining institutional flexibility. This perspective aligns with our findings that stakeholders value both clear standards and context-sensitive decision-making in program approval.

The framework operates within a dynamic environment where policy shifts, economic trends, and technological changes constantly reshape the higher education landscape, requiring adaptable approval processes that can respond to emerging needs while maintaining quality standards.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

To assess this study's research questions, we developed a mixed methods approach that leveraged qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. For our qualitative research approach, we focused on utilizing semi-structured interviews and reviewing documents that included policies, annual reports, newspaper articles, and forms related to our study. The qualitative approach further allowed us to examine Missouri and its eight-neighboring state's academic program approval and review processes through multiple lenses and experiences. Our quantitative approach is to build a proof of concept for a program approval dashboard to consolidate program-level information statewide.

Document Analysis

The qualitative component of our study began with an extensive document analysis. This analysis encompassed MDHEWD policies, procedures, and forms related to state-level academic program approval and review practices, as well as recent academic program approval submissions for each of the three types of review. We also examined MDHEWD CBHE's Approved Missions for each of its 27 public postsecondary institutions. Additional document sources included the University of Missouri System Board of Curators virtual meeting materials, CBHE meeting materials, MDHEWD annual reports, and state and local news articles.

To gain a foundational understanding of how states surrounding Missouri approach their academic program approval and assessment processes we began our research with a document analysis of the databases, forms, and documents unique to each state. These were accessed through each state's unique higher education supervisory department's website. The eight states selected for this analysis are all neighbors to Missouri and share a physical border. The states selected include Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. This sample provided insight into the experiences of states with similar cultures, demographics, and workforce trends. Materials acquired informed an initial perspective as to each state's unique approval and review processes. Interviews in the next stage were then utilized to add color and detail to this information, by adding commentary and further detail not available in a standard document review.

Interviews

Protocol Development

The study employed semi-structured interview protocols, carefully designed to address all research questions while remaining flexible enough to explore unexpected themes that emerged during conversations. We created four distinct but interconnected protocols: one for academic department chairs and program directors, one for chief academic officers, one for state higher education agency

representatives, and one for the eight neighboring states comparative analysis. Each protocol was designed to explore participants' unique perspectives while allowing for cross-group comparison of key themes.

The protocol development process began with a thorough review of the research questions and conceptual framework to identify key areas of inquiry. We then conducted a preliminary document analysis of MDHEWD materials and academic program submissions to understand the current process and inform question development. The protocols incorporate open-ended questions about participants' experiences with and perceptions of the academic program approval process, while also including specific probes about identifying an academic program need, the process related to establishing a new academic program, program review criteria upon its approval, documentation requirements, and perceived challenges or opportunities for process improvement.

To ensure quality and relevance, the draft protocols underwent multiple rounds of review and refinement. They were reviewed by our research team for alignment with research questions and theoretical frameworks. This iterative development process helped ensure that our interview questions would effectively capture the information needed while remaining accessible and meaningful to participants.

Missouri Stakeholder Interviews

To assess the various perspectives related to the creation and approval of a postsecondary academic program within Missouri's public two- and four-year institutions, we established three groups of stakeholders. The first group consisted of members of the MDHEWD staff and representatives from the Missouri CBHE. These interviews assessed how the department supports institutions with aligning various institutional objectives (micro) with state-level economic and workforce demand needs (macro). As well as how the current academic program approval and review policies align with these desired objectives. The next group included the perspectives of Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) or senior academic leaders of these institutions. This stakeholder group provided insight into how academic program maintenance and accountability exist on campuses in relation to the institution's mission, enrollment, and workforce demand strategy. The final stakeholder group focused on individuals with roles directly related to the creation and/or submission of a new academic program proposal. By interviewing academic department chairs and program directors, we explored perspectives related to how academic programs are developed and how preexisting academic programs are revised; what processes and policies institutions have implemented; and what efforts are exhausted to complete the requirements for MDHEWD's program review and, eventually, CBHE's approval or denial of the request.

The Missouri Stakeholder interview component of our study included 17 academic program approval and review stakeholders within the State of Missouri's public 2- and 4-year postsecondary institutions. The sample comprises nine academic department chairs or academic program directors, three chief

academic officers (CAOs), and seven representatives from MDHEWD and/or its Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE). These interviews identified stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of the current academic program approval and review processes at MDHEWD, while also assessing how perceptions vary based on institution type, size, and academic programs offered. Two additional interviews were conducted based on referrals from Missouri participants within the study. However, their analysis and inclusion within the study were omitted due to data collected and its relevance to the overall examination of academic program approval and review practices.

Stakeholder Group	Interviews Conducted	2-Year Institution	4-Year Institution
CBHE/MDHEWD	5	-	-
Department Chairs & Program Directors	9	5	4
Chief Academic Officers	3	2	1
Total	17	7	5

Table 1: Missouri Stakeholder Interviews Conducted

Neighboring State Interviews



Figure 4: Missouri's Neighboring States

Our second research question served to inventory and inquire as to the process of academic program approval and review in other states. The eight states identified were Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. These states were selected based on their geographic location; all share a border with Missouri and therefore serve as potential competitors for Missouri institutions of Higher Education. The agencies within these states

function to support Higher Education in capacities both similarly and different to the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development. Representatives or teams from each of these state entities were contacted and solicited for an interview via email. Specifically targeted were those persons most directly involved in the processing and/or review of academic programs and cite specific experiences from working with applications, boards, and institutions. Most typically these were varying titles (e.g. Commissioners, Directors, Vice-Presidents) within Department of Higher Education Offices of Academic Affairs. In speaking with state representatives, two of the states noted that their 4-year and 2-year institutions were supported by different agencies or another department in the same

agency. To fully understand this state's approach to academic program approval and review it was then necessary to interview both state departments. This was the case for Iowa and Kansas, which ultimately brought our total interview count to 10 with bordering state entities.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis will inform the answer to the research question: How do Missouri's eight neighboring states approach their academic program approval and review processes? The document analysis and interview transcriptions were coded based on notable themes identified in our conceptual framework, examples of which can be seen in the Table 2 below. Interviews and document analysis from each state agency informed an individual matrix unique to that board/department. The individual concept clustered matrices were organized into the following concept frameworks:

Academic Program Approval Process	• Process Components • Forms, Technology • Workforce Alignment • Motivations
Program Approval Processes for Institutions in other States	• Processing Time • Institution Feedback on Process • Institution Feedback on Other Programs • Duplication
Academic Program Review Process	• Process for Review • Process for Monitoring • Assessment • Sunsetting
Miscellaneous Questions	• Ideal Program Elements • Value of Program Review • State Mission Alignment
Other	• Any other content provided

Table 2: Neighboring State Interviews Concept Frameworks

After each state had a completed individual matrix, state findings were then compared using categories above to code findings by common themes between one state agency or another. Ultimately, this led to the creation of a master matrix representative of reoccurring themes present in multiple states.

Quantitative Research Methods

The quantitative portion of our study explored program performance data to identify how data-informed insights could enhance Missouri's academic program approval and review processes. We examined programs in fall 2017, focusing on seven high-enrollment programs representing approximately 250 students. These specific programs (cybersecurity, statistics, criminology, health science, and aviation flight technology) were selected because they had sufficient enrollment numbers to generate meaningful persistence and graduation metrics, unlike other programs approved during the same period with smaller cohorts.

The fall 2017 timeframe was deliberately chosen to allow for the collection of longer-term outcomes data, particularly employment and earnings information, which requires a multi-year tracking period. The cohort is defined as first-time, degree-seeking students enrolled in fall 2017. Performance metrics tracked included:

- Persistence from fall 2017 to fall 2018
- Graduation rates within 150% of normal time (3 years for 2-year institutions, 6 years for 4-year institutions)
- Employment outcomes 7 years post-enrollment
- Annual earnings calculated as the average of four quarters in the 7th year after enrollment

Our analytic approach adapts Atkins' (2022) *Start, Stop, or Grow Model*, organizing program data into four dimensions: mission alignment, academic quality, market demand, and financial sustainability.



FINDINGS

This section presents findings from our mixed methods investigation of Missouri’s academic program approval and review processes. Through three distinct but interconnected analyses, we examined: (1) Missouri stakeholder experiences and perspectives, (2) neighboring states’ processes and practices, and (3) quantitative program performance data. Our findings are organized by these three research streams, corresponding to our research questions and methodological approaches.

Missouri Stakeholder Analysis

Document Analysis

Materials examined focused on identifying additional context related to the MDHEWD’s academic program approval process, the routing structure of submissions from Missouri institutions of higher education, review of the CBHE’s Approved Missions for its public postsecondary institutions, and examples of recent submissions by institutions. We also examined the number of programs approved, updated, and discontinued over the last six years, postsecondary enrollment within the state’s public 2- and 4-year public institutions, recommendations from a 2016 Higher Education System Review task force, newspaper articles, and the MDHEWD’s strategic plan.

Missouri’s Higher Education System Review Task Force

In 2016, the Higher Education System Review Task Force was created by the CBHE at the request of then Speaker of the Missouri House of Representatives, Todd Richardson, and then Chairman of the House of Representatives’ Higher Education Committee, Stephen Cookson (Tab C December 15, 2016, n.d.). The task force was asked to “discuss recommendations on the overall structure of public two- and four-year institutions, varying institutional missions, and the degree review and approval process” (Tab C December 15, 2016, n.d., p. 1). Shortly after, on June 8, 2017, the CBHE approved a new, three-tiered academic program approval process (Tab K June 08, 2017, n.d.). Other than minor revisions since then, the policy and practice has remained the same.

The Creation of Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development

The Missouri “Talent for Tomorrow” initiative in 2018 established a “statewide coalition of corporate executives, educators, community leaders, legislators, and members of the executive branch to develop and advocate for a comprehensive suite of proposals to address workforce needs” (Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, 2021, p1). The following year, Missouri Governor Mike Parson signed Executive Order 19-03 that transferred the Missouri Division of Workforce Development from the Department of Economic Development to the Department of Higher Education (Shurr, 2019). This also included the transfer of the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC), which was the research division of the Department of Economic Development and provides “analyses and assistance to policymakers and the public, including studies

of the state's economic trends, targeted industries, and labor markets” (Shurr, 2019; “About Us”, n.d., para. 1). Shurr (2019) shared the following quote from Governor Parson regarding the changes:

When you look at our economy, you see a lot of good things — low unemployment, job growth, wage growth. But when you look at what’s happening in our neighboring states, you see that we could be doing a lot better. We believe these changes will move Missouri forward. This is how we become the best in the Midwest. (para. 8)

Forging a New Path and Strategic Direction

After the merger, the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (2021) established a new strategic plan. It highlighted four themes:

Access - removing barriers to education and employment

Success - supporting learners and workers through a holistic lens

Affordability - Identifying resources and creating opportunities

BPTW (Best Places to Work) - Continuous improvement in culture and process (p. 9)

This plan also set **educational attainment**² and **labor force participation**³ targets for the state.

MDHEWD’s “Best in Midwest” targets were set at 60% educational attainment and 70% labor force participation by 2030 (Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, 2021, p. 3).

Initial benchmarks were measured at 47% educational attainment and 63% labor force participation (Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, 2021, p. 3). In the most recent strategic plan update, MDHEWD is at 50.5% and 63% educational attainment and labor force participation, respectively (Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, 2023).

New Academic Program Requests

Each 2- and 4-year public institution’s CBHE Approved Mission guides which type of review (Routine or Comprehensive) a new academic program will be routed through. Each of the 27 Missouri public postsecondary institutions recently reviewed and revised their CBHE Approved Missions. Examples of CBHE Approved Missions are provided in Appendix C.

We were provided several examples of Routine Review submissions from MDHEWD to support our document analysis. Routine Reviews are for new academic program proposals that are within the submitting institution’s CBHE Approved Mission. MDHEWD’s new academic program submission form for Routine Review is 5 pages without any supplemental information included from institutions (see Appendix E). On the Routine Review form, institutions acknowledge the following assurances:

² Percent of working-age population (ages 25-64) with a workforce-relevant credential or above.

³ Percent of noninstitutionalized population aged 16 or older who are part of the labor force.

- If the proposed new program is within the institution's CBHE approved mission.
- If it will be offered within the institution's CBHE approved service region.
- If the program builds upon existing programs and faculty expertise.
- If the program does not unnecessarily duplicate existing program in the geographically applicable area.
- The program can be launched with minimal expense and falls within the institution's current operating budget.

MDHEWD provided us with two 2-year, public institution Routine Review academic program submissions for Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees. They also provided us with three 4-year, public institution Routine Review academic program submission. One of these were a Bachelor of Science degree (BS) and the other two were Master of Science (MS) degree programs. Based on new academic program Routine Review submission examples provided by MDHEWD, Table 3 identifies primary attributes provided within each proposal submitted.



One notable difference in the Routine Review proposals analyzed was that although they included similar elements, the level of depth and details provided to support the assertions being made varied between institutions. For example, most of the program outcomes and projected student enrollments did not reference any sources that led to the projections established. Another difference is the supplemental documentation provided (or shortage of details included) related to the curriculum, including existing course descriptions and any programs within the Midwest that already exists or closely resembles the program being offered. Lastly, although the MDHEWD has a form and template for institutions to utilize for their Routine Review submissions, the format and methods used to share data and details about the proposed new program varied by institution.

Included within Proposal	2-Year		4-Year		
	AAS #1	AAS #2	BS #1	MS #1	MS #2
Type of Program (AA, AAS, BS, MS, etc)	X	X	X	X	X
Admission Requirements	X	X	X	X	X
MDHEWD Acknowledgments (Assurances) Checked/Evidence Provided	X	X	X	-	X
CIP⁴ Code	X	X	-	X	X
Projected Enrollment for Program	X	X	X	X	X
Projected Graduates	X	X	X	X	X
Curriculum Map	X	X	X	-	X
Faculty/Instructor Credentials	X	X	X	X	X
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)	-	X	X	X	X
Accreditation/Accrediting Body	X	X	-	X	-
Supplemental Documentation (letters of support, evidence of program need)	-	X	X	-	-
Length of Proposal (total pages)	6	27	16	3	8

Table 3: Elements Included with Routine Review Examples Provided from MDHEWD

The Comprehensive Review comprises of seven forms and does not include the additional supplemental information institutions are expected to provide. Programs submitted through this approval process are under additional scrutiny as proposals must have two 20-day public comment periods (one in each phase; two phases total). In the final stages of the Comprehensive Review, if the

⁴ Classification of Instructional Programs

MDHEWD determines that the institution does not meet minimum criteria for approval, the process will be closed. An appeal process is available but there is no guarantee that it would be reviewed during the next CBHE meeting following the denial.

We were provided several documents, and forms related to the Comprehensive Review process. The initial document shared is six pages and outlines the process for Comprehensive Review, including the timeline for the two phases associated with this approval process. Based on the Comprehensive Review documents provided, if the proposing institution submits Form 1 by March 1, then the review processes could run through February of the following year. When examples of Comprehensive Review submissions were requested, we were shared that these are rare, and no submissions were provided for us to examine.

For both new academic program proposals processes (Routine and Comprehensive), all forms and any supplemental materials are uploaded to the academic program actions portal on the MDHEWD's website.

Revisions to Existing Academic Programs

The Staff Review process allows institutions to submit revisions to existing academic programs without much delay in the time necessary to review by the MDHEWD. The MDHEWD Administrative Rule considers this process for “minor changes” (Academic Program Approval, 2023, p. 4). The form asks if the Staff Review request is one of the following 10 options:

- Title or CIP Change
- Combination program created out of closely allied existing programs
- Add option to existing program
- Add certificate program (from approved existing parent degree or stand-alone)
- Delete program
- Delete option
- Place program on inactive status
- Change of address
- Closed location
- Existing Program, New Site

Institutions may include supplemental documentation related to the program revision being submitted, such as copies of the current curriculum and the proposed curriculum change. Staff Review submissions from institutions to the MDHEWD by the first of the month should be reviewed, processed, and reported on by the end of the same month (Academic Program Approval, 2023). Academic program changes, including forms and their supplemental materials, are uploaded to academic program actions portal on the MDHEWD's website.

A Review of Academic Program Activity and Enrollment

Since the adoption of the current academic program approval process, new academic program additions have steadily declined since their peak in 2020. Academic program actions across all three categories (New (added), Deleted/Inactivated, and Program Changes) continue to see a decline since the COVID-19 pandemic. A visualization of these trends is presented in Figure D1. Additionally, the MDHEWD annual reports revealed that both 2- and 4-year headcount and full-time equivalent enrollment has declined during this same period as represented in Figure D2 and Figure D3, respectively.

Interview Results

All Missouri interviews were completed with individuals representing one of three stakeholder groups: MDHEWD/CBHE Representative, Chief Academic Officer (CAO), or Academic Department Chair or Program Director. CAOs and Academic Department Chairs/Program Directors represented either a 2- or 4-year public institution within the state. Each stakeholder shared their experiences related to the MDHEWD administrative rule regarding academic program approval. To protect participant identities, quotes collected and used from the interviews have been coded based on the stakeholder's group and their institution type (2- or 4-year), if applicable. The Missouri stakeholder recruitment email is provided within Appendix F and the interview protocols are provided within Appendix H.

Academic Program Process Timeline

The academic program process timeline refers to the length of time a new academic program takes to implement based on an identified need (either through workforce, labor, or student interest demand). New academic programs are a faculty-led initiative and often an additional responsibility placed on faculty outside of teaching and research. This timeline involves several steps that institutions must complete to obtain approval to implement a new program or make a change to an existing program. Missouri's public postsecondary institutions strive to establish an internal system of checks-and-balances when creating a new academic program. This includes forming their own accountability measures that will be used to evaluate the new academic program. These are created before the formal request is submitted to the MDHEWD for its own review and approval.

Academic Program Process Timeline: Finding I

The academic program approval process involves multiple layers, policies, and timelines that create tension between thoroughness and responsiveness.

Institutional processes can be lengthy, complex, and inconsistent across various institution types (i.e., 2-year, and 4-year institutions). This challenge affects institutions' ability to respond quickly to workforce needs. For example, one Chief Academic Officer shared how long a new program can take to launch from its inception through final approval.

"It can take 18 months to get a new program into a catalog and started. And given the rate of change that our world sees...By the time you got this great, innovative new program, now it's old news. The curriculum has to be reviewed."

-4 Year Institution Chief Academic Officer

Additionally, an Academic Program Director echoes similar sentiment. They identify that one of the greatest challenges with launching a new academic program is time.

It's a thorough research project and an assessment of what those other programs are, what you want yours to be, and then when you can kind of put together this picture of a perfect program before you can propose it."

-2 Year Institution Academic Department Chair

Established institutional policies and procedures related to creating or revising academic programs also vary by institution type and size. Several interviewees acknowledge that their institution had established a policy related to creating a new academic program, while others share that it was either a well-established procedure or that a policy was currently under development based on recommendations from the regional accrediting body, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Furthermore, the tedious nature of establishing a new academic program can require several internal reviews and revisions that may further delay the proposal from being submitted to the MDHEWD for its review and approval. As another Academic Program Director highlights from experience at their institution:

We have several steps in our process. When (faculty) submit a proposal to the workflow (then) it could be rolled back to them. You know saying "Hey, can you make these changes?" And sometimes they're very slow to make that happen, because their primary goal is teaching and not revising curriculum all the time."

-2 Year Institution Academic Department Chair

These findings highlight the intricate steps and processes necessary to propose a new academic program. These processes can vary by institution but are still considered to be very time consuming and require multiple layers of internal review. The thoroughness involved in planning, researching, and developing a new academic program can make it challenging to quickly adapt to changing labor markets and student demand.



Academic Program Process Timeline: Finding II

MDHEWD's Administrative Rule provides three different approval procedures and an established timeline for decisions on academic program proposals submitted to the state.

The MDHEWD has a defined policy related to establishing a new academic program. It has established three types of routing procedures for new academic program approvals (Staff, Routine, and Comprehensive). Each of these routing methods influence how quickly each request is approved due to how each request is codified within MDHEWD's Administrative Rule. For Routine state-level review, there is a clear 30-day mandate to provide a decision on new academic programs submitted by its postsecondary institutions. Depending on the type of academic program review being submitted by institutions to the state, the routing for approval could affect the timeline for launching a new academic program to meet student interest and workforce demand.

Several interview participants shared that their institution has submitted multiple academic program requests to the state through its Staff Review and Routine Review procedures within the last few years. Also, participants from various institution types share that MDHEWD's approvals are quick and usually take about a month for a decision to be made. One academic program director expresses appreciation for the Staff Review and Routine Review procedures:

“(regarding Staff Review) Super simple. That's really sped up the process and allows us to be far more flexible with labor demand. (regarding Routine Review) We do get the question like “Why do we have to do these?” You know, but they are there for a reason because it forces all of us to truly look at the data that we need.”

-4 Year Institution Academic Program Director

Conversely, several participants share mixed opinions related to their perceptions of and experiences with the Comprehensive Review process. Institutions that need to respond to labor market demand outside of their CBHE Approved Mission, the Comprehensive Review could be barrier to expanding programs quickly and supporting academic achievement within the state.

“Prior to that (CBHE Approved Mission) change every program (request) I had to do (went through) the Comprehensive Review. That was awful because it took two years.”

-4 Year Institution Academic Program Director

For some stakeholders, the Comprehensive Review seems beneficial, as it allows an opportunity to expand academic program offerings outside of their CBHE Approved Mission. For other institutions, it seems limiting due to other state institutions challenging a proposal's approval. Lastly, for those institutional stakeholders that have not participated in the Comprehensive Review process, one participant shared that they were warned by others that it is lengthy.

Data and Decision Making

All stakeholders emphasize the importance of data-informed decisions, but face challenges with data integration and accessibility. Most participants prioritize workforce data, enrollment projections, completion rates, and financial viability projections when proposing a new academic program. In interviews, the core element of “data” and access to it for making data-informed decisions remained a constant theme for each stakeholder group. There is also a notable gap between data availability and the sources of data used by institutions. Lastly, some participants identified discrepancies between institutional program data and data elements that are on record with the state.

Data and Decision Making: Finding I

Several sources of data and external stakeholders influence the creation of a new academic program.

Missouri stakeholder interviews identify several data points and information used to determine the need for a new academic program and what data will be presented within an institution’s academic program proposal. The most common data considered includes market analysis (workforce demand, student demand, and forecasted growth), the transfer feasibility of the program (primarily with 2-year institutions), financial viability (revenue generated versus program expenditures), faculty available for program versus need for new hires, and additional funding resources (federally in financial aid eligibility for students and assistance with covering program resource expenses and industry partners). Other information also considered by institutions include curriculum design, student learning outcomes, potential student completion goals, other similar programs offered within the state, if the program is considered within the CBHE approved mission, and graduate migration post degree or credential completion. A 2-year institution Chief Academic Officer shared their thought on consolidating the data necessary to assess feasibility and propose a new academic program:

“A pain point is often the data feasibility. That we should have data informed (program requests). It’s just more the means of the timing and the sourcing of information that often then has to involve the (institution’s) IR offices and you know further collaboration that then can create delays and timing.”

-2 Year Institution Chief Academic Officer

Other information considered by institutions to determine if a new academic program should be established is gathered from external stakeholders. Several participants shared that their institution or academic department relies on the influence of Advisory Boards to help determine academic program needs or identify changes to workforce skills. Representatives on these boards provide input on various skills needed in the workforce and items for academic program leaders to consider. For some institutions, they have policies established that their advisory boards must meet at least once a year.

One department chair shared the types of questions and conversations they have their program's Advisory Board:

“(with Advisory Boards) Have those conversations about what do you need? What kind of people are coming into your workforce? What else can we offer them?”

-2 Year Institution Academic Department Chair

Additionally, an Academic Program Director emphasizes the value of Advisory Boards while also casting caution regarding the level of influence they should have (or not) with academic program creation.

“Advisory Boards are great...They are but they are not. They're still your folks and some people are a little bit more hesitant to be pushy. Some advisory boards are more effective than others.”

-4 Year Institution Academic Program Director

One participant shared that industry and economic trend data are not easy to access on the MDHEWD website, and that institutions usually rely on their own data collecting processes. Several participants shared a broad range of sources and tools used to retrieve market analysis data related to workforce demand and student enrollment projections. Those include MERIC (Missouri Economic Research and Information Center) data, LightCast (formerly BurningGlass), CollegeBoard, O'NET, National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and EAB (Education Advisory Board). Many of the tools shared included third-party platforms leveraged by institutions to help assess a new academic program's viability and require additional financial resources to subscribe to the service. Some participants also shared that they do not have the data needed to support program decisions in a format that is readily available for use.

Data and Decision Making: Finding II

Integrating statewide data to forecast expected workforce and student-interest demand for academic programs is challenging.

Access to statewide data on student interests for academic programs was identified as a limitation. To assess student interest within an academic program, some 2- and 4-year institution stakeholders shared that their academic leaders would sometimes leverage establishing a minor or certificate program to gauge student interest. A Chief Academic Officer shared that predicting student interest and demand for an academic program is challenging:

“We've tried to do surveys of the public to see what they want. It's not typically very helpful. Estimating student demand is very difficult.”

-2 Year Institution Chief Academic Officer

Participants also shared that there is a need to project workforce needs and demand in order to establish new academic programs or revise existing ones to align with teaching the skills needed upon certificate or degree completion. Furthermore, connecting Missouri institutions' academic programs to its workforce and student-interest demand does appear to be a challenge. Although institutions are trusted to determine workforce and student demand for new academic program creation, access to the state's workforce data is not readily available and does not integrate with the academic program approval process or outcomes assessment. One interview participant shared:

"It would be so great if we could actually connect some of these data points and understand if we approve something, what that means down the road. I still do not believe that information is connected into the academic program approval process where we could say, yeah, in Northwest Missouri, we really do need some Bachelor of Applied Science degrees in mechatronics. And we need some in Southeast Missouri...Just really planning (predicting) student interest, student demand, and student need all over the state."

-MDHEWD/CBHE Representative

Data and Decision Making: Finding III

Access to existing statewide academic program options is not readily available.

Several participants shared that there is not currently a statewide academic program inventory dashboard that shows data associated with each of the state's active academic programs. When attempting to identify if other institutions currently offer a program that a college or university is considering proposing, the information must be researched through several different avenues, including searching other state institution's websites. An academic program director shared:

"Sometimes we're just aware if the local colleges have it. Sometimes our faculty are very aware of what the other local programs are being offered. And then sometimes we just do some research on our own by looking at everybody else's website and see what they have."

-2 Year Institution Academic Program Director

Necessary versus Unnecessary Duplication

Academic program duplication is when an institution offers (or proposes) an academic program similar to one that is being offered by another institution within the state (see Appendix B). The MDHEWD focuses on monitoring academic program duplication in an effort to manage state funding resources and mitigate market saturation. However, program duplication is sometimes necessary to support workforce needs, student demand, or to leverage an institution's access to resources external to the academic program itself (i.e., clinical hours, internships, etc.).

Necessary versus Unnecessary Duplication: Finding I

In most cases, institutions attempt to avoid academic program duplication.

Stakeholders within Missouri strive to avoid duplicating another academic program that may exist within one of the other state public institutions. There is a profound awareness that academic program duplication is not acceptable except for unique circumstances. The MDHEWD's Administrative Rule shares that academic programs that are considered as general studies or the Liberal Arts and Sciences may be duplicated. The Administrative Rule also outlines that it would be permissible to offer a duplicate academic program if there is enough student demand within the state or region.

"If it is in the general or Liberal Arts and Sciences, our rule defines that does not constitute duplication. If it is a technical field, there are some statutory provisions that, like the University of Missouri, is the only one that can offer an engineering degree."

- MDHEWD/CBHE Representative

However, some stakeholders shared that duplication may also need to exist under additional circumstances. One interviewee shared that if an institution is more selective and appeals to a more targeted student population based on its academic rigor or if the existing program is accelerated, then a similar program should exist to provide opportunities for students that do not meet those academic standards. Another circumstance related to the institution having strong community support for an academic program and its desire to meet the needs of its service region.

Academic Program Quality and Oversight

There is a complex balance between maintaining state standards and allowing institutional autonomy. Stakeholders express varying views on the "quality metrics" that MDHEWD's Administrative Rule establishes. Some acknowledged that these metrics are limited and do not reflect effective measurements for assessing the quality academic programs. The evidence suggests tension between



resource-based and quality-based decision making. Additionally, Missouri stakeholders highlight the role of program-specific and regional accrediting bodies, and how they also influence new academic program approval and review practices.

Academic Program Quality and Oversight: Finding I

Finding a balance between autonomy and accountability between the state and its institutions.

The CBHE has the authority to not only approve new academic programs, but to monitor and review existing academic programs with the possibility of sunseting low performing programs. The CBHE may conduct program productivity reviews by requesting what is called a “full academic program inventory analysis.” This allows the CBHE to assess all 2- and 4-year academic programs within the state, including their performance, number of graduations, and enrollment totals. Several participants shared that there is value and importance in the state providing a non-intrusive level of accountability and quality control related to academic programs its higher education institutions offer. Most of the emphasis on accountability is associated with the use of taxpayers’ dollars to help fund public postsecondary education within Missouri. One participant shared that routine monitoring of academic programs may even provide additional benefits when lobbying for state resources.

“Is it the Department or CBHE’s purview to monitor quality and relevance to the Workforce? If you’re going to ask for resources, taxpayer resources, then probably the answer is “Yes”. If the Commissioner goes to the Governor or the Commissioner goes to Legislators or our lobbyists go to Legislators, if we had good data that say, here are the data that are documenting what we do is affecting our state in a positive way. It’s affecting your region, your legislative area, in a positive way.”

-4 Year Institution Academic Program Director

Additionally, a four-year institution’s Chief Academic Officer adds that there is perceived value in the state routinely monitoring existing academic programs.

“I’m OK with there not being more (MDHEWD) reviews. We review our own programs...But if they (MDHEWD) can provide us with “you really need to look at program X (because) they’ve only had three graduates in the last three years” then that would give us some impetus to go to the (institution’s academic) department and say you’ve got to fix something and now.”

-4 Year Institution Chief Academic Officer

However, some participants highlighted that this is not a practice typically completed by the state, nor does the state have a specified cadence executed to assess existing programs. A few participants were unsure how the state supports the review and monitoring of existing academic programs. Furthermore, one interview participant shared the following:

“It is really up to the institution to manage if its (established academic program) is successful or not.”

- MDHEWD/CBHE Representative

Many 2- and 4-year college and university stakeholders share that they have developed (or are in the process of developing) an institutional policy to routinely review their existing academic programs. Several participants shared that this includes the use of a 5-year review cycle, in addition to annual reports. Some have developed institution-wide metrics and created dashboards to help staff and faculty to track program viability. Conversely, some institutions shared they did not have a policy for program review and monitoring.

Academic Program Quality and Oversight: Finding II

The state and its institutions have set forth unique criteria regarding academic program review metrics; capturing, reporting, and prioritizing elements of the data necessary for these reviews can be a challenge.

Missouri stakeholder interviews identified several data points used to assess academic programs for first their CBHE provisional status and secondly an academic program review for those that have full approval. This data provides stakeholders with the ability to capture information regarding the academic program's performance which institutions ultimately decide they are successful. The most common data points related to academic program review practices include student enrollment, market demand, retention rates, completions or degrees conferred, certification exam pass rates, percent of degree completions based on admittance yield, financial viability, continued accreditation, and achievement of learning outcomes.

Each new academic program approved by the CBHE has performance targets, which are set by the institution submitting the proposal. For the new academic programs that receive "provisional approval" status, some stakeholders doubt that the criteria used by the CBHE to determine if an academic program should move to unconditional approval status are actually considered. One 4-year institution academic program director shared:

"They (MDHEWD) list these (six) criteria that that they use for five-year review and the 4th criterion is the number of completions. But again, there's a bunch of other criteria that they say they use. From what I can tell, and from what I understand, the only criterion they actually seem to use is the 4th one...What are they really looking at? Maybe they really should be looking at all six or so criteria, because there may be programs that they ought to be recommending be discontinued."

-4 Year Institution Academic Program Director

Academic program data reporting from institutions is presented as a challenge. The existing state reporting system is limited and does not capture variables necessary to monitor critical aspects of academic programs. One 4-year academic program director shared:

We do submit student level data to the state. Every institution does. That process and what is submitted (in EMSAS) has not been updated since 2016...There (are) things we are doing and offering that the state can't track in their system anymore. When they want the data on that, (it) becomes an ad hoc report instead of it being systemic and just causes more work for us creating inefficiencies."

-4 Year Institution Academic Program Director

Academic Program Quality and Oversight: Finding III

Understanding the influence of external stakeholders and accrediting bodies within academic program approval and review.

Beyond CBHE's authority to approve and review academic programs, external entities also serve as another level of governance of academic program quality. Depending on the type of academic program, regional and subject-specific accreditors provide another layer of academic program oversight. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) serves as the regional accrediting body for Missouri. Stakeholders interviewed shared that their institutions rely on the recommendations and approval from the HLC for new academic programs. Also, stakeholders provided that the HLC influences their institutional policies and procedures related to academic program creation and monitoring.

"We are currently examining our academic program review process. It's something that the Higher Learning Commission commented on during their last visit. It's an area of an improvement for us..."

-2 Year Institution Academic Program Director

State Policy and Technical Considerations

States create education policies to guide their executive departments and postsecondary institutions with structure and frameworks to establish consistent practices. These policies include the creation of regulatory authority for compliance, accountability, and ensuring fair practices. However, policies must be maintained to ensure they remain relevant and effective in leading the entities they are designed to govern. Regular policy review and revision can assist governing agencies, like postsecondary coordinating boards, with improved operations that align with best practices and the changing landscape of higher education.

State Policy and Technical Considerations: Finding I

Established trust between the MDHEWD, the CBHE, and Missouri's 2- and 4-year public institution stakeholders.

There is a profound trust placed on MDHEWD's recommendations to the CBHE. Participants from each stakeholder group identified trust in the MDHEWD to help them navigate the state's administrative rule related to the academic program approval process. Furthermore, the MDHEWD places a great deal of trust in the information institutions provide as part of their academic program approval applications. A representative from the MDHEWD/CBHE stakeholder group shared:

"We kind of put a lot of trust in the institutions that they know what they're submitting, and they've done the research. All we just have to do is give them the "Yes" or the "No" (regarding approval)."

- MDHEWD/CBHE Representative

MDHEWD is trusted as a resource when institutions have questions or issues related to navigating its policy. Most of the 2- and 4-year interview participants shared that they are familiar with the state's policy related to academic program approval and were aware of where to go for assistance to navigate questions or the submission of their request. For those few participants that were not familiar, they did identify that they knew who to contact for help.

"(understanding of state's policy) Very well. I mean, they're very clear (state's policy on academic program approval) and I refer to them when I am submitting and making sure that we are in compliance. (deans and department chairs) Lean on me."

- 2 Year Institution Academic Program Director

State Policy and Technical Considerations: Finding II

Policy review is necessary to assess how its terms, definitions, and requirements align with current trends and practices within higher education.

Missouri stakeholders share varying perceptions of MDHEWD's current administrative rule for academic program approval and review. Thoughts related about the policy vary by stakeholder role, institution type, and their official position at their institution or within the MDHEWD or CBHE. A representative from MDHEWD/CBHE shared the following:

"I find the complexity and vagueness of our academic program approval rule to be a challenge...How it is different from the Higher Learning Commission, who's our accreditor."

-MDHEWD/CBHE Representative

Some participants also shared that the current Administrative Rule impedes non-academic and non-credit credentialing opportunities, delays meeting state educational attainment goals, responsiveness to the changing nature of workforce training, and does not allow institutions to take advantage of some federally funded programs.

State Policy and Technical Considerations: Finding III

Policy alignment with the MDHEWD's strategic initiatives and objectives.

Postsecondary education strategic initiatives and objectives are set forth by the MDHEWD based on political factors and guidance from state leaders. One of the goals of the MDHEWD's "Building Missouri's Future" strategic plan is to achieve 60% educational attainment by the year 2030.

Stakeholders interviewed were asked if they believe the current state policies related to academic program approval and review processes support the state in achieving this goal. Most of the participants shared that they were familiar with the MDHEWD's goal and that the current practice supports the state in achieving this goal. Conversely, there were a few participants who shared they believe this goal should be reviewed and audited more routinely and that student help (in the form of grants or financial aid) could assist with achieving this goal.

Additionally, the use of CBHE Approved Missions for guiding academic program approval practices was identified as a point of contention for some stakeholders. In one example provided by a participant, one institution's new academic programs would frequently be routed through Comprehensive Review until it updated its CBHE Approved mission. Once the institution's CBHE Approved Mission was updated to align with the types of academic programs it was trying to offer, most of their new academic program requests were now routed through Routine Review for approval. Another participant shared that the CBHE Approved Missions may be irrelevant, and the state should focus on data and workforce demand instead to guide which academic programs are needed and offered by its 2- and 4-year institutions. One 4-year academic program director shared:

"I just don't know how valuable those missions are. Especially at a bachelor's level, every institution is offering pretty much every program."

-4 Year Institution Academic Program Director



Surrounding State Analysis

Document Analysis Findings

To first understand how the various state agencies in neighboring states to Missouri approach academic program approval and review processes, we began with an analysis of publicly accessible state documents. These included the various components required of institutions when submitting applications (e.g. Letters of Intent and Notification, employer needs surveys, fiscal summaries, etc.) documents to aid in the logistics of planning, or housekeeping components such as definitions, board schedules, or out of service area request forms; as well as their respective administrative code or statute that govern their processes.

Almost all states provided some kind of instructional document, separate from statute or administrative code, to assist institution representatives when submitting applications. Many states also offered more specified forms to change or expand currently existing programs (e.g. name change, curriculum revision, CIP code change request). Most relevant to our research, all states linked to a pdf form, template, or website to submit their application; New program application components varied but typically included some combination of the following pieces: general descriptions, program goals and objectives, curriculum outlines, proposed program budgets/revenues, workforce data, and relevant accreditation information.

Approving Body	Polices	Public Institutions (4y/2yr)	SARA Member	Institution Review Period	Req. Data on Market Analysis	Encourage Partnerships	Charge for Submission
Arkansas Division of Higher Education	Arkansas Code Annotated §6-61-208	11/22	Yes	60 Days	Yes	Yes	No
Illinois Board of Higher Education	23 Illinois Administrative Code 1050	12/48	Yes	30 Days	Yes	Yes	Yes
Iowa Board of Regents	Board Policy Manual 3.6	3/0	Yes	90 Days	Yes	Yes	No
Iowa Department of Higher Education	Iowa Administration Code 281-260C	0/15	Yes	14 Days	Yes	Yes	No
Kansas Board of Regents	Kansas Board of Regents Policy Manual Chpt.2 Section A7	6/0	Yes	45 Days	Yes	No	No
	Kansas Board of Regents Policy Manual Chpt.3 Section 5	0/26	Yes	10 Days	Yes	Yes	No
	Kansas Board of Regents Section 5	0/26	Yes	10 Days	Yes	Yes	No
Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education	KRS 164.020 § 15-16	8/16	Yes	30 Days	No	Yes	No
Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development	Missouri Revised Statutes Chapter 173 Department of Higher Education Section 173.005.	13/14	Yes	20 Days	No	Yes	No
Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary education	Title 281- Chapter 4 EDUCATION Chpt. 4	7/6	Yes	90 Days	Yes	No	No
Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education	Chapter 3 Academic Affairs Policy 3.4	15/14	Yes	2 Weeks	No	Yes	No
Tennessee Higher Education Commission	Academic Policy A1.0	10/13	Yes	15 Days	Yes	Yes	No

Table 4: Partial Document Analysis from Neighboring States

To best prepare institutions for the academic program review process, states also posted items including the following to their publicly facing websites:

- Fiscal Year Department Goals
- Benchmarks/Productivity Thresholds, etc.
- Policies and Instructions for Reviewing of Programs including submission of data
- Tips of effectively collecting data

However, there are also many states that elect to keep the review process documents privately accessible to institutions or allow them the autonomy to dictate and create their own.

A more in-depth index of state materials can be found in appendix J.

Interview Results

All neighboring state interviews were completed with one or more senior-level employees with various titles and positions (e.g. Directors, Commissioners, Chief Academic Officers) for that state, all of whom have a direct and active role in reviewing and approving new program requests and reviewing previously approved programs. To protect participant identities each state has been coded to a specific number; the citation ESI refers to the external state interview and the state being quoted or cited.

Process Timeline and Efficiency

Timeline is an often-discussed variable in the academic program approval process in all states. Various state agencies must balance an obligation to uphold statute and a responsibility to provide institutions with an agile and quick response. This process is further complicated in all neighboring states by technology limitations, board turnovers, and a learning curve for submitters. Ultimately, after completing a lengthy institutional review process and various levels of accreditation requirements, the additional time added by state review can feel unnecessary and redundant.

Process Timeline and Efficiency: Finding 1

State agencies seek to ensure quality in the academic offerings of their institutions but struggle to determine if they add value or just increase processing times.

Prior to reaching state agencies for review, program proposals can spend up to three years at the institutional level being reviewed by school leaders. When juxtaposed against the rapidly changing higher education landscape, further delays in implementing new programs may only hinder a state's economic growth. Many state agency officials are then left to question the value they provide to the application review process (ESI - 6, 8, 9).

“It’s just they[institutions] have their ducks in a row. They know who they need, they know who the faculty are, they’ve got the lab lined up, they’ve got the donor, they’ve got this, they’re ready to go and bam, and we make them wait. And so, we’ve got the same kind of disconnect at the state where the institution is like “let’s go, we got it, got it”. We’re like, “hey, let’s talk about it as a family. Let’s make sure this is the right direction to go in.” (ESI-4)

At the same time, it is often the state agencies who catch errors in applications, identify redundancies in programs, and ask critical questions relating to institutional mission alignment. A state agency official noted that while they never outwardly deny programs, if institutions reach a point that they can no longer answer questions or defend elements of their proposed program the request will most likely just not advance to the next stage, nor be revisited by the institution (ESI-4). Many also spoke to witnessing common math and spelling errors in final submissions or feeling that institutions did not leverage review periods or feedback, opting to instead submit documents all at once for what they believe would lead to a faster review. This serves as a reminder of the rationale for these processes and an agency's role to pause for an in-depth review to ensure quality and consumer protection (ESI - 3, 4, 7, 8, 10).

“We don’t want it to take forever, but creating a new degree program should be a deliberative, thoughtful process.” (ESI-4)

Process Timeline and Efficiency: Finding 2

Program submitters typically lack procedural experience, creating knowledge gaps that affect the submission process. Agencies have only just begun to capitalize on technology to improve processes.

For many faculty, the proposal of a new academic program is a once in a career experience and, therefore, unfamiliar territory for those attempting the process. To rectify this learning gap, a few states have implemented video tutorials or monthly meetings of those navigating the new program application process. In doing so, they can create a familiarity and comradery between those submitting on behalf of the institution and reviewing at the state, ultimately streamlining the process by removing the need for back and forth questioning and confirmations (ESI - 4,5, 9).

“So, details and of course the institutions that have been doing this for a long time often know the tricks of the trade, if you will. They know the kinds of things we’re looking for. But some of our smaller institutions don’t do this very often. And if that proposal originates with a faculty member who doesn’t have a clue because they’ve never written a proposal, then it’s more challenging for them and for me.” (ESI-3)

All states spoke to a lack of technology in their application process and that any technology relied on Microsoft office projects and forms, or programs/software designed for other needs. This meant many

agencies were simply making do with the resources available, not necessarily the most applicable or more current in technology. This is especially interesting when many agencies are not looking for elaborate submission or analysis portals but simply want to provide a one stop location for institutions and other agency representatives to check statuses and provided materials (ESI -1, 2, 9, 10)

Process Timeline and Efficiency: Finding 3

Final approval often lies with the Coordinating or Governing Board for that state agency, many of which are comprised of individuals with varying priorities and experiences in higher education.

One of the most prominent constraints to program approval timelines are the governing or coordinating boards themselves and their varying schedules. Agency Boards often meet on a monthly or quarterly basis, meaning that a poorly timed submission could mean waiting to provide your notice of intent to propose a new program to the board. As boards are often a Governor- or legislature-appointed combination of volunteers from various industries, their higher education knowledge is limited and their priorities in program approval as it relates to workforce, are unique to individual values or political agendas. This presents challenges when agency officials present program proposals to the board. Institution budgets and missions vary distinctly between institution types, it is therefore hard to compare proposals or present them in a way that is digestible for someone unfamiliar to the financial structures within higher education. Ultimately, this causes issues as a board member weighs proposals or considers the value or impact of programs so differently scaled. An example being the preference given to new trending programs such as STEM, over the creation of arts programs (ESI - 6, 8, 10).

Data and Decision Making

Data serves a critical role in both the program application process and the review process for current applications. Proper use of data can have direct influence on program approval or funding decisions.

Data and Decision Making: Finding 1

Data specifically related to workforce need is critical and a common requirement for a program to be approved.

State agencies are often reviewing applications looking specifically for data that proves that the new proposed program will equate to jobs for graduates and workforce growth for their state. To supplement this, many agencies also utilize reports from databases such as the Department of Commerce, LightCast, and Gray Data for additional information on workforce projections. Tennessee Higher Education Commission and Iowa Department of Higher Education utilize input from external reviewers or industry experts to speak on the technical and/or curricular nuances of a program under review. Agencies have also utilized more creatively sourced qualitative data from employers in the area, an example of this would be when Kentucky utilized industry testimonials from venues, producers, performers and more to legitimize the creation of new program on the topic of Capital Bluegrass and Traditional Music (ESI - 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 10).

Data and Decision Making: Finding 2

4 out of 10 State Agencies don't audit the program review data that institutions provide them with, choosing instead to label it as an institutional exercise.

Several state agencies spoke to a lack of need to review new program proposals that are already being reviewed yearly at the institutional level, seeing it as a waste of the board's time. Believing instead that institutions should utilize this an opportunity for reflection and their own growth. Since many states empower institutions to make their own decisions regarding the sunseting of programs, it us up to the institutions to compare their data (e.g. graduation rates) amongst other programs to confirm they are meeting those thresholds (ESI - 2, 6, 8, 9).

"The academic program review is more, for lack of better terms and exercise for our institutions, we do not have the time or resources to read all of those program reviews."
(EPSI-2)

Data and Decision Making: Finding 3

Whereas 5 of the 10 neighboring states rely on a program review data and an institution's ability to meet productivity thresholds to determine program futures and funding

For 50% of state agencies, institutional program review and its corresponding findings are the ultimate measure of a program's success. Therefore, the credentials a program can provide to students and enrollment numbers they can boast are determinants of how much tax funding they should receive in a performance-based funding model. One state even went so far as to state that the emphasis placed on program review is where agencies should be directing their attention, reducing the time spent on initial proposal review (ESI - 6, 10).

"To me, the better use of our time would be to not do as much work on reviewing programs on the front end. Give the institution kind of the benefit of the doubt that they reviewed it, that they think there's going to cash flow and then approve the program conditionally, you know, give them a chance to approve to demonstrate that it's going to work." (ESI-6)



Academic Program Quality and Oversight

Many states find themselves in an identity crisis as they struggle to define their role in the approval process.

Quality Control and Oversight: Finding 1

Agencies are largely unsure of how to define their role or specify their added value in the program approval process.

A common concern among state agencies is that their review of proposals is simply a rubber stamp, or only additional work put on institutions. Many agencies also grappled to achieve a balance between the tasks of providing resources to institution's submissions or serving as a watch dog for state legislators. However, others have been able to better define their position according to their specification as a coordinating or governing board. Meaning that as a coordinating body they are there to make judgements specifically on the grounds of resources and data, whereas governing boards may feel more empowered to make comments regarding quality (ESI - 2, 3, 4, 5).

"So, I would say if we are just correcting grammar and adding commas and telling them that Table 2 appears twice, that's helpful. But that's not what we do. We are very big picture in the feedback that we provide and, and my goal is truly to be a resource and to help the campuses." (ESI-6)

"But you as the, you know, sort of the agent responsible for caring for those processes and the institutions, you want to make sure you're being supportive and not a barrier. Because a lot of times it just feels like another thing that institutions have to do." (ESI-10)

Quality Control and Oversight: Finding 2

States must ensure the provision of quality programs for students, both as stewards of tax funds and protectors of state consumers.

Empowered by state statute, it is a state agency's responsibility to ensure that programs approved and reviewed by their departments ensure the best possible outcomes for their state's students and economy. Higher Education is a rapidly changing landscape reflective of the ever-changing workforce, agency review ensures that students and taxpayers do not get burnt by institutions. (ESI 1, 4, 9, 10)

"I'm just not going to make excuses for anybody because you're getting, you know, \$800 million in taxpayer money and these programs need to be viable or they need to be justifiable for some reason." (ESI-10)

Quality Control and Oversight: Finding 3

Agencies can assume a position of opposition and make the tough decisions that institutions are unwilling to make, regarding program denials and terminations.

One agency official remarked that institutions may be hesitant to sunset ineffective programs themselves because they may have to work directly with those faculty in the future or could run into them in the supermarket. Agencies don't have that problem; they can make the tough calls and tell faculty to sunset programs as necessary.

"We'll be the big bad. You know, as long as it's in the intent, it's making sure we have a quality product for students at the end." (ESI-1)

Stakeholder Collaboration and Communication

The research reveals complex communication networks between institutions, state agencies, and external stakeholders. Evidence suggests successful collaboration often depends on informal networks and relationships rather than formal structures.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Communication: Finding 1

Institutions do not leverage the opportunity to collaborate with and/or learn from their fellow state institutions.

There is a large emphasis put on duplication concerns in reviewing new program proposals. However, agencies urge institutions to not always see duplication as a negative. By leveraging the opportunities brought from an exchange of ideas, institutions can support each other in creating the best and most effective programs possible; that ultimately support their institutions and state economy growth as a whole (ESI 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9)

"So, number one, on the front side, what we're telling everybody is you need to collaborate with your peers. So, everybody who's running programs, no matter what they are, it's an open book because they can look at the training information program, and part of their program approval process is for them to cite that. [That] We have looked at all the other institutions running the program." (ESI-4)

Stakeholder Collaboration and Communication: Finding 2

Agencies are desperate to encourage institutional collaboration, believing this is a failed opportunity to capitalize on in their role as an intermediary between institutions.

Instead of seeing each other as competition, agencies advocate for institutions to see each other as resources and opportunities for collaboration. Whether by leveraging content areas between programs, opportunities for guest lectures, or providing learned experience in the building of new labs, agencies would like to catalyze partnership between institutions that would ultimately benefit their students and state as a whole" (ESI 1, 4, 7).

“We want institutions to collaborate wherever possible that's one of the things that we struggle with regularly. We just can't seem to get institutions to collaborate... Anything that indicates you're working with somebody who does, who isn't on your campus that can add something that you don't have.” (ESI-4)

Necessary vs. Unnecessary Duplication

Duplication is a predominant reason behind the program review process in many states, though there is a clear distinction between duplication that is necessary or unnecessary when it comes to program approval. State agencies approach duplications by placing a large emphasis on the needs of students, state, and workforce.

Necessary vs. Unnecessary Duplication: Finding 1

The workforce's current and future needs, supported by data, is a major factor in whether duplication will be allowed or not.

In the interest of being fiscally responsible with taxpayer dollars, unnecessary duplication is a large concern for agencies. Though there are some elements of territorial-ness amongst institutions regarding academic areas or credentials, agencies are more concerned if the need warrants the creation of an additional program and therefore a necessary duplication. There needs to be a market and a need, proven by data to ensure resources are not wasted and students are not fighting for the same limited opportunities (ESI 3, 4, 5, 6).

“We don't want to cannibalize ourselves.” (ESI-4)

Necessary vs. Unnecessary Duplication: Finding 2

However, access to program resources- or lack thereof can kill a new program proposal.

Program demand, however, can be derailed by a lack of program infrastructure. For example, there is frequently a need for more trained nurses, but if there are not enough clinical opportunities to meet the increased number of students the program will be denied on the basis that it won't be able to produce qualified and experienced graduates (ESI 1, 3, 4, 8, 10)



Necessary vs. Unnecessary Duplication: Finding 3

Politics play a large role in approvals. Chief Academic Officers often avoid disparaging other's proposals to protect their own. Board member agendas can lead to bias in program preferences.

Nuances in the agendas of board members and Chief Academic Officers can directly impact decisions on duplication. Chief Academic Officers often avoid disparaging other's program proposals to protect their own proposals from negative response in the future. This can be detrimental if they do not speak the concerns they have for their own enrollment if a new program is introduced. Conversely board members are often less in favor of approving additional general education or arts programs, as they may not appear as lucrative or trendy as new workforce programs. (ESI, 2,3,7)

"I think we get so micro focused on high salary jobs and wanting our students to pursue those and graduate and get in those, that we don't think of the liberal arts and the fact that an engineer and a doctor like to go to the theater too, you know." (ESI-2)

State Policy and Technical Considerations

As state agencies, these groups are empowered by statute and legislation to safeguard tax dollars and ensure institutional accountability to their mission and their students. Therefore, agency staff and their perspective boards must balance the needs and wellbeing of individuals, businesses, and state.

State Policy and Technical Considerations: Finding 1

Agencies primarily review proposals on the grounds of mission alignment and to check for duplication.

New program proposals are critiqued with a large focus placed on duplication and its alignment with the institution's mission. Agencies are responsible for holding institutions accountable to taxpayers, institutions need to ensure they are providing quality education that will not mislead or harm students or consumers alike. Measuring program proposals on the grounds of duplication can ensure students are employed at the conclusion of the education. Measuring program proposals against mission alignment can ensure the success of a program (ESI - 8, 9).

"As well that, you know, they want some kind of check on the institutions. Most legislators don't trust universities." (ESI-2)

State Policy and Technical Considerations: Finding 2

States have also been actively updating and reevaluating their approval processes, both to streamline institutions and legitimize their role as more than a rubber stamp.

Most agencies are actively working to update procedures to ensure they are adding value to the program approval process. This is done with the intention of making the process more simple and

quicker for institutions and a more accurate reflection of the specific components they are looking for in an application, as well as true reflection of state statute (ESI-1, 2, 7, 9, 10).

"We recently implemented a pretty significant overhaul of our approval process with the effort of more closely aligning to our statutory obligations as well as to kind of streamline the process and simplify it for our campus partners." (ESI-1)

Exemplar States in Data-informed Program Evaluation

Our analysis of Missouri's surrounding states also revealed several exemplary practices in data-informed program evaluation:

- **Kansas** has developed an integrated program performance dashboard that combines student outcomes, market demand, and financial sustainability metrics in a single visualization tool.
- **Iowa** employs a differentiated review process that varies data requirements based on program risk level and institutional performance history.
- **Illinois** has created regional benchmarking processes that contextualize program performance within specific economic regions.
- **Tennessee** utilizes a comprehensive data integration system connecting K-12, higher education, and workforce data to provide long-term program outcome assessments.
- **Arkansas** has implemented an early warning system that uses leading indicators to identify potential program challenges before completion data becomes available.

Individual state agency profiles featuring academic program management processes, approximate timelines, motivations, technology, and more can be found in Appendix I.



RQ3: Data-Informed Insights for Program Approval and Evaluation

Our third research question explored how data-informed insights could inform Missouri's academic program approval criteria and review methods. We developed a proof-of-concept dashboard to demonstrate how visualizing program performance data could support more comprehensive program approval and review process.

Program Performance Dashboard Development

Our proof-of-concept dashboard focused on programs approved in fall 2017, including:

- AAS, Aviation Flight Technology & Aviation at OTC Lebanon and OTC Waynesville (Ozarks Technical Community College)
- AS, Health Science (Three Rivers College)
- BS, Criminology, with options in Adult System, Juvenile System and Diversity (Northwest Missouri State University)
- BS/BA Statistics (Truman State University)
- BS, Cybersecurity (University of Central Missouri)
- BS, Applied Health Science with options in Aging Studies and Exercise Science (Northwest Missouri State University)

This sample was specifically selected to demonstrate visualization capabilities across diverse program types rather than to provide comprehensive analysis. The dashboard presents critical program metrics, including enrollment numbers, persistence rates, graduation rates, employment rates, and average annual earnings. As shown in Figure X, the Aviation Flight Technology program had 19 students enrolled, a 53% persistence rate, 32% graduation rate, 84% employment rate, and average earnings of \$46,000 seven years after initial enrollment.



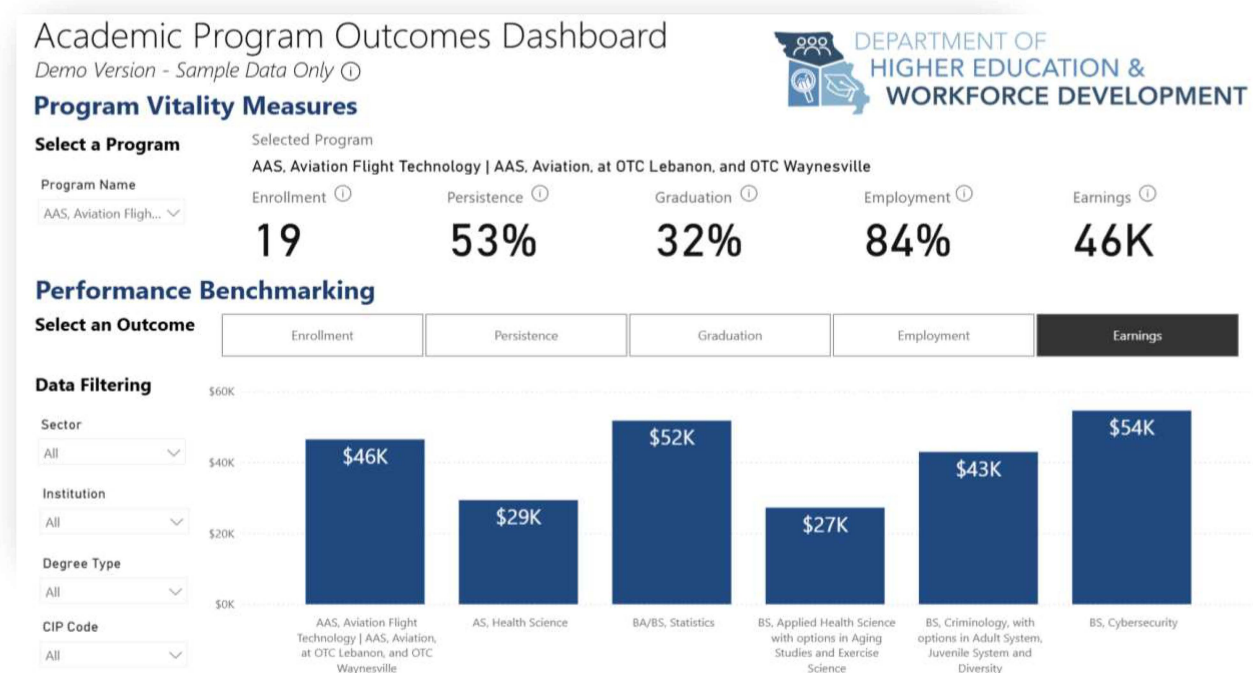


Figure 5: Academic Program Outcomes Dashboard

Dashboard Functionality and Insights

The dashboard offers several key capabilities that could enhance Missouri's program evaluation processes:

- **Integrated Metric Visualization:** The dashboard interface consolidates multiple performance indicators in a single view, allowing users to quickly assess program health across multiple dimensions.
- **Comparative Benchmarking:** Users can compare program metrics against similar programs using filters for sector, institution type, degree level, and CIP code. For example, selecting the "Earnings" tab reveals that Cybersecurity graduates earn the highest average salary (\$54,000) among the sampled programs.
- **Interactive Exploration:** The full interactive version of the dashboard allows users to filter data dynamically, toggle between different metrics, and generate customized comparisons. Users can explore the full functionality of the interactive dashboard here: [Academic Program Outcomes Dashboard \(Demo Only\)](#).

While the interface includes benchmarking capabilities, the limited sample makes these comparisons illustrative rather than conclusive. The dashboard only includes select metrics related to academic quality and market demand, without addressing mission alignment or financial sustainability from Atkins' framework. These limitations underscore that the current dashboard should be viewed as a proof-of-concept demonstrating visualization and comparative features that could be implemented with a more comprehensive dataset, rather than as a tool for current program evaluation.

DISCUSSION

Our comprehensive analysis of Missouri's academic program approval and review processes reveals several key challenges and opportunities for process enhancement. Four critical themes emerged from our findings that warrant particular attention.

First, process efficiency and timeliness represent significant concerns across stakeholder groups. The current three-tier review structure creates

considerable variation in approval timelines, with some programs taking up to three years from conception to implementation. This extended timeline undermines the state's ability to respond quickly to emerging workforce needs. Neighboring states have implemented promising alternatives, including expedited review pathways for strategic priorities and conditional approval mechanisms that allow programs to launch while finalizing requirements.

Second, despite widespread recognition of data's importance, stakeholders face substantial challenges in data access, integration, and utilization in the academic program approval and review processes. This disconnect between available workforce data and academic program planning represents a missed opportunity for alignment. Implementing a comprehensive dashboard that visualizes program performance across multiple dimensions would support more informed decision-making.

Third, our findings revealed limited collaboration between institutions in program development and delivery. While institutions generally avoid unnecessary duplication, they face challenges related to resource sharing or joint program development. Although other factors may contribute to decline in student enrollment within Missouri's 2- and 4-year institutions, such as access to financial aid, academic program availability within various parts of the state may prevent students from enrolling in a postsecondary institution. Several surrounding states have implemented effective models for fostering collaboration while respecting institutional identity. Such approaches could help Missouri expand educational opportunities while optimizing resource utilization, particularly in high-cost specialized fields.

Finally, stakeholders expressed nuanced perspectives on quality assurance and accountability. While they valued state-level oversight to ensure program quality, concerns emerged about the metrics used for evaluation and the balance between compliance and improvement. Missouri's provisional approval process creates a foundation for outcomes-based assessment, but stakeholders reported inconsistent application. Similarly, the state's periodic program productivity reviews could support continuous improvement but lack clear criteria and regular implementation schedules.

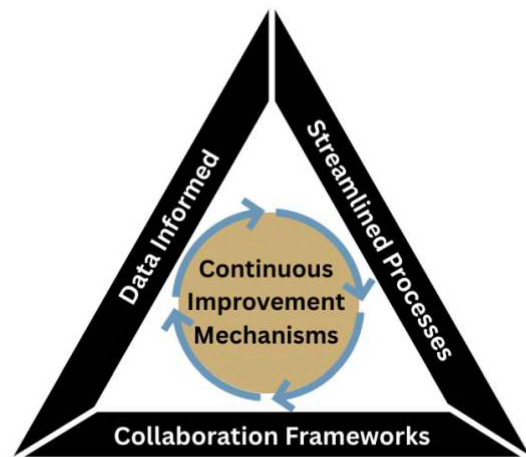


Figure 6: Visual Representation of Recommendations

LIMITATIONS

This study seeks to contribute to the assessment of the academic program approval and review practices within the state of Missouri and its 2- and 4-year public institutions, but it has its limitations. We assessed reliability and validity to determine the limitations of our work.

Internal Limitations

Although we strived to establish consistency in our procedures, variations remain regarding how interviews were conducted and interpreted. These differences may arise from the distinct perspective and methodologies of the individual team members that conducted the interviews. Communication styles also affect the depth and nature of insights collected which may potentially affect the depth and nature of the data collected, and analysis conducted. Despite our efforts to institute neutral questions, both the interviewer and interviewee biases may influence the information gathered.

External Limitations

One key constraint of this study is the gap between the interviewee sample size and the broader populations both within Missouri's postsecondary education landscape and those representatives from the coordinating boards of the eight surrounding states. While we strived for a representative sample, our study does not fully encompass a broader range of perspectives related to both RQ1 and RQ2. Limitations exist for the number of representatives within each stakeholder bucket and the institutional types within the state. For RQ1, a convenience sample was leveraged based on the client's access to various stakeholders within each group across the 2- and 4-year institutions in Missouri. For RQ2, our analysis does not represent a comprehensive assessment of the various states' policies due to the limited number of interviews conducted. This also restricts RQ2 in that we only spoke to the state agencies and not the institutions regarding their thoughts and opinions on the process, leaving our research restricted by the singular perspective.

Additionally, for RQ3, we were provided a limited quantitative data set to assess the success and performance of academic programs approved since 2017. The limited number of programs provided during the period assessed restricted the depth of our analysis related to the MDHEWD's administrative rule influence on new academic program creation and the performance of those programs created since the implementation of the revised policy.

Even with these limitations, we believe our study provides valuable insights into the academic program approval and review procedures within the state of Missouri and further context around how its surrounding eight states conduct similar practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Create Collaboration Arenas

Missouri has unrealized potential for state growth by failing to create dedicated space and time for institutions and stakeholders to exchange and share ideas.

MDHEWD would benefit from the establishment of state coordination councils, that would allow for cooperative and strategic academic program planning between institutions. Missouri has an opportunity to leverage the lived and learned experience of its institutions and professional areas to provide the best quality education programs for the state as a whole. Since Missouri has already made an intentional and strategic move to combine the areas of Workforce Development and Higher Education, MDHEWD would benefit from continuing to embed this ethos in the resources and spaces for collaboration they provide institutions.

Either through the creation of virtual discussion boards, monthly online meetings or hosting a meeting 1-2 times a year, MDHEWD could dedicate time and resources to the exchange of ideas. There are also opportunities for workshops around submitting new programs, reviews and productivity thresholds, or host guests from the accreditors, such as the Higher Learning Commission. Institutions could share lessons learned in hindsight following the creation of programs to institutions beginning the process of proposing their own.

This could come in the form of curriculum recommendations, potential external partners, or even the physical design of spaces such as labs. 2-Year and 4-Year institutions could have a dedicated space to discuss transfer articulation agreements and curriculum mapping. Academic programs of similar nature could leverage the concentration areas of other institutions' programs to strengthen their own. For example, if two institutions both offer a computer science program with differing concentrations of Artificial Intelligence or Cyber Security. They could focus on collaborative opportunities between each other instead of the potential of competition in the face of duplication. Guest lectures through an exchange program with professors, demonstrations of different techniques and technology, or team up on research projects, are just a few ways that institutions could exchange ideas and services to strengthen both of their programs and therefore the state workforce.

The creation of these networks will allow institutions to submit program proposals that are more informed to the state processes. This would also provide an opportunity for institutions to tailor their own new academic program approval processes to mirror or dovetail into the state processes. By creating communication channels between institutions and MDHEWD it would allow easier avenues for questions of clarification and allow institutions to have a better understanding of what is currently being offered regarding issues of duplication. Streamlining the process will also help to rectify issues around timeline and ensure a speedy review process.

These cohorts also allow spaces for the ‘boots on the ground’ professionals who are working to research, compile, and prepare their applications, to have access to information typically provided only to the Chief Academic Officers. With the multitude of departments submitting proposals and the extensive responsibilities of CAOs it’s natural to assume they would struggle to disseminate information to all applicable parties. Also, where are CAOs are sometimes burdened by the politics that can inhibit them from criticizing other institutional proposals, those working to create, manage and sustain academic programs would be more willing share frank and honest feedback in discussions with agencies or other institutions.

Most importantly, it will create a space for feedback and suggestions to continuously improve the process. To maintain the most efficient processes moving forward and ensure the most concise and accurate information is provided to all institutions alike.

Resources to Support Institutions with Navigating the Academic Program Approval Policy and Submissions

There is a need for MDHEWD to establish resources for the submission and tracking of new academic program proposals along with their provisionally approved status.

Missouri stakeholders consistently identified challenges with navigating the process surrounding Administrative Rule 6 CSR 10-4.010 - Academic Program Approval. Participants interviewed reported that they knew where to go for help with navigating the process and trust the MDHEWD, with most mentioning that they contact staff within the department when they have a question or are unsure of the status of their academic program submission.

As staff within the MDHEWD’s Academic Affairs are expected to review proposals and provide a decision within 30-days, providing simplified, self-help resources on their website would assist various institutional stakeholders with independently navigating the Administrative Rule for Academic Program Approval. The MDHEWD should organize its academic program submission resources (e.g. guides, required forms, and examples of submissions) on its website in a centralized hub. This would provide access to resources and reference materials for institutions beyond regular office hours. Also, this hub could help mitigate the number of inquiries and questions sent to the MDHEWD staff regarding required documents, routing of a new program proposal, navigating the academic program submission portal, and steps involved based on which program approval review is required.

Neighboring states have implemented technologies to streamline their academic program approval processes and remove more “housekeeping” tasks from the responsibility of agency staff. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education utilize a program called SmartSheets that upon the receipt of a Letter of Intent automatically creates the message and starts the distribution of new program proposals to chief academic officers. Another example is Tennessee’s Higher Education Commission

who utilize Formstack to receive documents, this platform allows them to utilize drop down menu as options for better consistency in institutional support. Tennessee also uses a program called Leankit to track new program application review through program cards that can identify what stage or staff member a program is assigned to, as well as the ability to make notes on cards regarding conversations or due dates specific to that application. Both Oklahoma and Tennessee agencies spoke about how the use of these programs led to greater organization and a greatly improved processing time. Information is easily accessible and therefore more straightforward when updating institutions or speaking to board members.

Another element to support institutions with navigating the Administrative Rule includes offering training or virtual workshops. With access to virtual meeting tools like Zoom and Microsoft Teams, the MDHEWD could host quarterly workshops virtually at minimum to no costs to its public institutions. Staff within MDHEWD's Academic Affairs should host virtual "office hours" once a month for institutions to login and join for Q&A or general assistance. These workshops could also be recorded and utilized as additional self-help resources that are made available on their website.

The MDHEWD could leverage guides to establish a set of standards that are aligned with its Administrative Rule for new academic program proposals. This would allow the department to demonstrate how proposals should be prepared while including examples of how its required projected metrics should be calculated along with any supplemental documentation that would be beneficial for approval. By developing these resources, the MDHEWD could begin to shift the department's role from transactional to a more strategically aligned position that further supports the state's mission for postsecondary education and oversight.

Infusing Data-informed Practices

Missouri stakeholders currently face significant challenges in accessing, integrating, and utilizing data for academic program decisions. To address these barriers and enhance evidence-based decision making, MDHEWD should develop a comprehensive data integration system that connects program performance metrics with workforce information and student outcomes data.

Creating a centralized, user-friendly dashboard can visualize program performance across the four key dimensions identified in Atkins' (2022) Start, Stop, or Grow framework: mission alignment, academic quality, market demand, and financial sustainability. This dashboard would provide institutions with standardized metrics for comparing similar programs across institutions, longitudinal tracking of program performance, regional context that accounts for geographic variations in workforce needs, early warning indicators to identify struggling programs before completion data becomes available, visual analytics that highlight trends and patterns in program performance.

The dashboard should integrate data from multiple sources, including MDHEWD's existing databases, workforce information. By making this information accessible through a single interface, MDHEWD can eliminate the current fragmentation that forces institutions to cobble together data from disparate sources.

Additionally, the merger of the Department of Higher Education with Workforce Development created an opportunity for better integration of labor market data with academic program planning. However, stakeholders reported that this potential remains largely unrealized. MDHEWD should work to strengthen workforce data connections by creating direct links between MERIC workforce projections and academic program approval processes. These data connections would empower MDHEWD to develop region-specific workforce demand visualizations that help institutions identify geographic areas of need in the state. These connections would help institutions demonstrate alignment between program proposals and workforce needs, which is a key requirement in the current approval process but one that many stakeholders struggle to document effectively.

Rather than relying solely on enrollment numbers and duplication concerns, MDHEWD should develop a more comprehensive set of metrics for evaluating program performance. These metrics should include student success indicators (persistence rates, completion rates, time to degree), employer outcomes (job placement rates, salary data), financial metrics (resource utilization, sustainability), and mission alignment measures (how the program supports institutional and state priorities). These metrics should be clearly defined and consistently applied across the provisional approval period and ongoing program review process. By establishing transparent standards for program performance, MDHEWD can create greater clarity around expectations while still respecting institutional contexts.

Currently, the initial program approval process operates largely separately from ongoing program review. MDHEWD should strengthen connections between these processes by using approval metrics as the foundation for subsequent program review, creating mechanisms to track how well programs meet their initial projections, developing a continuous improvement approach that uses review findings to refine approval criteria, and implementing regular reporting on how provisional programs progress toward full approval.

Continuous Improvement and Policy Review

Implement continuous improvement strategies and policy review, including stakeholder feedback and use of data-informed assessments.

Interview data suggests the MDHWE D Administrative Rule for Academic Program Approvals can be difficult to interpret, tends to limit institutions from responding to changes related to workforce need and student demand, and restricts some from taking advantage of federal-funded programs available

for postsecondary education. Adopting a regular review practice of the academic program approval policy should be integrated into the culture of the MDHEWD and with the CBHE. Similar to the HLC's Guiding Values for institutions seeking accreditation or reaccreditation, incorporating a "culture of continuous improvement" for policy management would further test this and other policies against the state's and MDHEWD's strategic objectives for postsecondary education (Guiding Values, n.d.). This guiding principle would assist in instituting a framework around regular policy review to ensure ongoing relevance and quality.

To establish a policy review practice, MDHEWD should expand upon the Missouri stakeholders interviewed within this study to identify additional perspectives. that were limited by the scope and resources available to solicit supplemental input for this study. Although the perspectives provided through the interviews within this study allowed for common themes to surface, we believe there is additional feedback available to assist MDHEWD with assessing implications of the current policy while identifying further opportunities for improvement and alignment with its strategic goals. An emphasis should be placed on assessing the policy's effectiveness and responsiveness to the state's workforce and postsecondary needs. Additionally, the Administrative Rule should allow MDHEWD flexibility to navigate strategic initiatives set forth. By aligning metrics and placing outcomes-based data as focal points, these would assist in deciding the policy's effectiveness. It would also allow the state to understand how the academic program approval policy is influencing various aspects of its educational attainment objectives and institutions' enrollment numbers. Lastly, a regular review of terms and how the state defines them in comparison to accrediting bodies and the federal government definitions would allow for a more cohesive alignment with new academic program proposals against an evolving postsecondary education landscape.



CONCLUSION

This study examined Missouri's academic program approval and review processes through a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, drawing on perspectives from diverse stakeholders, surrounding state practices, and quantitative program performance data. Our findings reveal both challenges and opportunities.

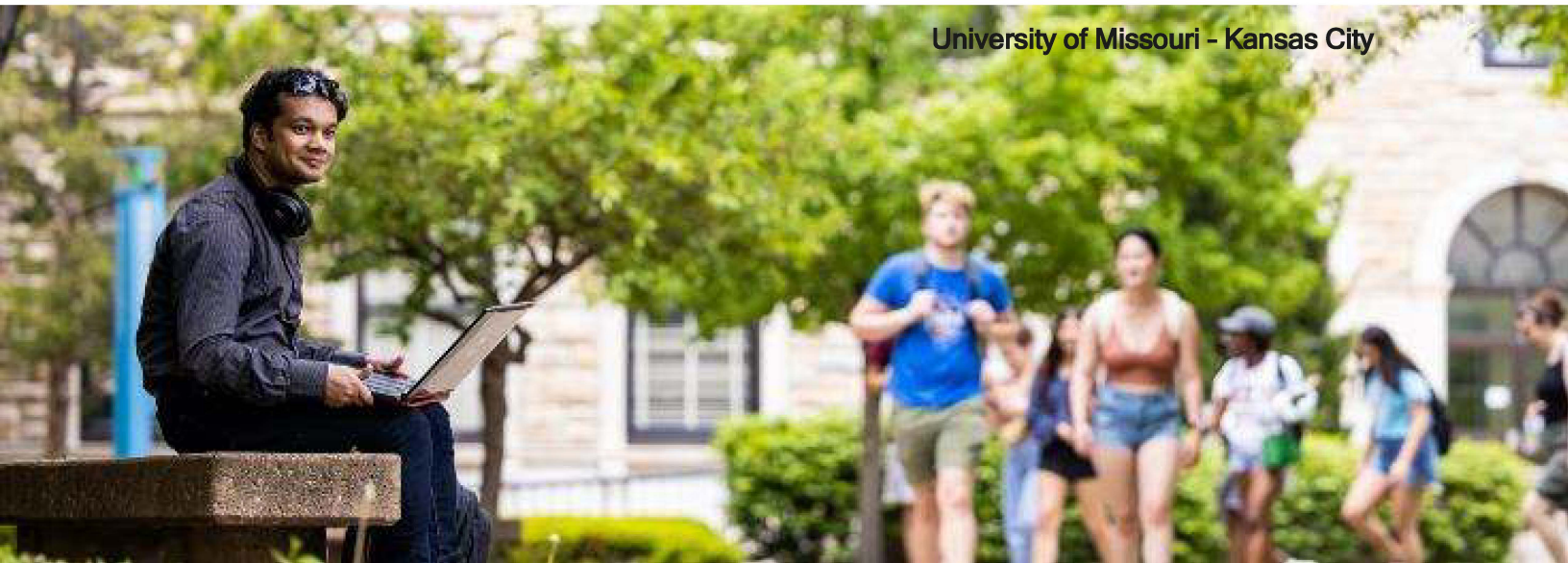
The core challenges include process complexity and timeline inconsistencies that limit responsive workforce alignment; data-integration gaps that hinder evidence-based decision-making; balancing quality oversight with institutional autonomy; and missed opportunities for institutional collaboration and resource sharing. These challenges are not unique to Missouri but reflect broader tensions in higher education governance between centralized coordination and institutional independence, between thorough evaluation and timely implementation, and between competition and collaboration.

Based on our findings, we recommend four strategic interventions to enhance Missouri's academic program approval and review processes:

1. Enhance collaboration mechanisms
2. Streamline processes and resources
3. Strengthen data integration and accessibility
4. Implement continuous improvement mechanisms

Implementing these evidence-based recommendations will enable Missouri to develop a more efficient, collaborative, and effective academic program approval system that maintains quality standards while improving responsiveness to workforce needs. By balancing necessary oversight with institutional flexibility, Missouri can foster innovation while maintaining accountability, ultimately strengthening the state's educational and economic competitiveness.

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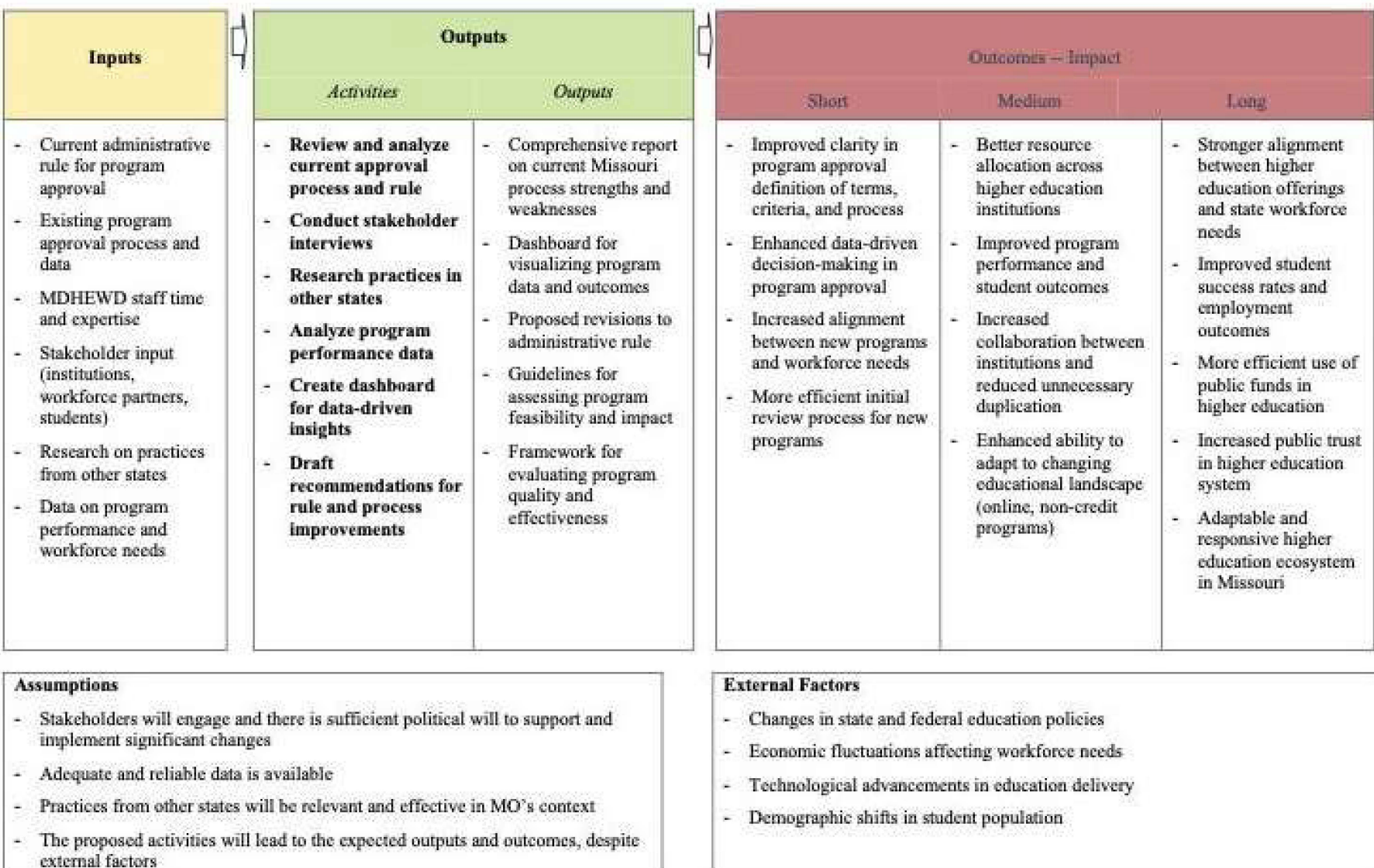
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 - Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education
 - Tennessee Higher Education Commission

Appendix A: Capstone Logic Model



Appendix B: Table of MDHEWD Definitions

Missouri Department of Higher Education Administrative Code & 2021 Strategic Plan Definitions

Term	Definition
CBHE-approved mission	A description of the public institution's programs, audiences served, level and type of degrees offered, or other distinguishing factors, which the CBHE has reviewed and approved.
CBHE-approved off-site location	Locations other than the main campus (for universities) or taxing district (for community colleges) that the CBHE has reviewed and approved. The department maintains an official inventory of approved off-site locations.
Certificate program	A prescribed course of study which confers an award other than a formal academic degree.
Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP)	A taxonomic scheme that supports the accurate tracking and reporting of fields of study and program completions activity. The CIP is the accepted federal government statistical standard on instructional program classifications, developed by the U.S. Department of Education.
Collaboration	Two (2) or more institutions of higher education working together to deliver an academic program or degree.
Combination programs	The result of a mechanical combination of two (2) previously existing programs.
Content	The program specialization with its related options, if any, for which recognition is intended to be given by the conferring of a degree or certificate.
Degree	An award conferred by a college, university, or other postsecondary education institution as official recognition for the successful completion of a program of studies as defined by and reported to the United States Department of Education and to the coordinating board's certificate and program inventory. In baccalaureate degrees or higher, the term program is generally the same as major.
Duplication	Proposing to offer the same or a similar program to one that is already being offered by another institution.
Inactive status	The result of formal action by an institution on the status of an existing academic program, which suspends the program for a period not to exceed five (5) years.
Institution of higher education	An institution which provides a collegiate level course of instruction for a minimum of two (2) years leading to or directly creditable toward at least an associate degree or any professional or other degree including, but not limited to, the baccalaureate, master's, specialist and doctoral degrees.
Level	A degree, such as associate, baccalaureate, first professional, master's, specialist, doctorate, and any other designation lower, higher, or intermediate to those which now exist or may be created. (Specialist programs, related to the state requirements for the certification of public-school administrators and to the further education of public school teachers and supervisors, should be limited specifically to the field of education. These programs are essentially extensions of master's level studies and should evidence a study beyond that expected of master's programs.)

Term	Definition
Minor change	Modifications to existing programs such as a change of program title or CIP code; the combination of programs; request for inactive status; the establishment of one- (1-) year certificate programs under an existing parent program; new options; request for program deletion; change in the mode of delivery; or new single-semester certificate programs.
New program	An academic, occupational or professional certificate or degree program developed for initial offering to students—1. On the campus of a single campus institution of higher education; 2. On a campus of a multi-campus institution of higher education on which campus such program has not been previously offered; or 3. At an off-campus site of any public institution of higher education, if one-half (1/2) or more of all the requirements needed to complete the new program may be met at an off-campus site.
Professional Degree	Is an award for completing a program that: 1) serves as a prerequisite to practicing in the profession; 2) requires at least two (2) years of college work prior to entering the program; and 3) requires a total of at least six (6) academic years of college work to complete the degree program, including prior required college work plus the length of the professional program itself.
Program	A prescribed course of study that leads to the formal award of a certificate or degree.
Program: Certificate 0	(Undergraduate) - Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (less than one (1) academic year) below the baccalaureate degree—A. Less than nine hundred (900) contact or clock hours; or B. Less than thirty (30) semester or trimester credit hours; or C. Less than forty-five (45) quarter credit hours.
Program: Certificate 1	(Undergraduate) - Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (at least one (1), but less than two (2) academic years) below the baccalaureate degree—A. At least nine hundred (900), but less than one thousand eight hundred (1,800) contact or clock hours; or B. At least thirty (30), but less than sixty (60) semester or trimester hours; or C. At least forty-five (45), but less than ninety (90) quarter hours.
Program: Certificate 2	(Undergraduate) - Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (at least two (2), but less than four (4) academic years) below the baccalaureate degree—A. At least one thousand eight hundred (1,800), but less than three thousand six hundred (3,600) contact or clock hours; or B. At least sixty (60), but less than one hundred twenty (120) semester or trimester credit hours; or C. At least ninety (90), but less than one hundred eighty (180) quarter credit hours.
Program: Graduate certificate	An organized program of study beyond the bachelor's degree, designed for persons who have completed a baccalaureate degree but not meeting requirements of academic degrees at the master's level.
Program: Post-master's certificate	(First-professional certificate) - An organized program beyond the master's degree but not meeting requirements of academic degrees at the doctor's level. This award is designed for persons having completed the first- professional degree (refresher courses or additional units of study in a specialty or subspecialty).
Program: Associate's degree	An award that normally requires no more than sixty (60) semester credit hours unless necessary for accreditation or licensure.

Term	Definition
Program: Baccalaureate degree	An award that normally requires no more than one hundred twenty (120) semester credit hours unless necessary for accreditation or licensure.
Program: Master's degree	An award that typically requires successful completion of a program of study of at least the fulltime equivalent of one (1), but not more than two (2) academic years of work beyond the bachelor's degree. Some of these degrees may require more than two (2) full-time equivalent academic years of work.
Program: Doctoral degree	The highest award a student can earn for graduate study (research/scholarship or professional practice).
Program deletion	The removal of a program or an option from an institution's program offerings.
Program change	Any revision or change in a program name or its nomenclature, including CIP number.
Program option or option	A formally designated area of specialization within an existing degree program that has a distinctive curricular pattern. A majority of required courses for the option will be taken in a core of courses common to all variations of the existing parent degree. For the purposes of program changes, option, emphasis area, and other similar terms are assumed to be equivalent.
Program type or type of program	A designation within a degree level, such as associate of arts (AA), associate of science (AS), associate of applied science (AAS), bachelor of arts, bachelor of science, bachelor of science in engineering, master of arts, master of science, doctor of philosophy, doctor of education, etc.
Public institution, public	An educational institution located in Missouri which is directly controlled or administered by a public agency or subdivision and which receives some appropriations in a direct or indirect manner for operating expenses from the general assembly.
Substantive curricular change	Significant modifications or expansion of an existing program. Examples of substantive changes include, but are not limited to, a change in the program's overall credits or goals; deletion and replacement of a significant number of courses in the program's curriculum; change in the program's purpose; change in the audience(s) that the program is intended to serve.
Educational Attainment*	Percent of working-age population with a workforce-relevant credential or above.
Labor Force Participation*	Percent of noninstitutionalized population aged 16 or older who are part of the labor force.
Midwest States*	Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Wisconsin

Term	Definition
Urban and Rural*	Rural counties are defined as having fewer than 150 people per square mile and not being part of a Census Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Urban counties are: Boone, Buchanan, Cass, Clay, Cole, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Newton, Platte, St. Charles, St. Louis, and St. Louis City. All other counties are classified as rural.
Working-Age Population*	Population aged 25-64

Note: Definitions are from the Missouri Department of Higher Education's Administrative Rule. Academic Program Approval, 6 MO Code of State Regs 10-4.021. (2023).

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Appendix C: Missouri CBHE Approved Mission Examples

Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education Approved Mission Examples

Institution	Type	CBHE Approved Mission
East Central College	Two Year	East Central College is a community college located in Union, Missouri. It is responsible for serving the residents of its taxing district and its service region. East Central College serves its service region by offering academic programs leading to the Associate of Arts, the Associate of Science, the Associate of Fine Arts, and the Associate of Arts in Teaching degrees, which transfer to four-year institutions, and postsecondary instruction in the liberal arts and sciences, and general education (including dual credit) that prepares students for transfer to four-year institutions. East Central College also offers many programs in career and technical education, leading to the Associate of Applied Science degree and certificates, and provides basic and workplace skills training for career preparation and advancement as well workforce skills training and customized training for businesses. The college's largest program is General Studies. It has particular strengths in nursing, allied health, and education. East Central College further fulfills its CBHE-approved mission by offering services in its region to promote and sustain economic development, small business development, and workforce development, in addition to a broad range of academic and cultural activities and events, and the shared use of facilities (libraries, theatres, galleries, etc.) and other types of institutional assets not available elsewhere in the region.
St. Charles Community College	Two Year	St. Charles Community College is a community college located in Cottleville, Missouri. It is responsible for serving the residents of its taxing district and its CBHE-approved service area. St. Charles Community College serves its CBHE-approved service region by offering academic programs leading to the Associate of Arts and the Associate of Science degrees, which transfer to four-year institutions, and postsecondary instruction in the liberal arts and sciences, and general education (including dual credit) that prepares students for transfer to four-year institutions. St. Charles Community College also offers programs in career and technical education, leading to certificates and the Associate of Applied Science degree, and provides basic and workplace skills training for career preparation and advancement as well workforce skills training and customized training for businesses. St. Charles Community College has particular strengths in nursing and other allied health fields, education, and computer science. St. Charles Community College further fulfills its CBHE-approved mission by offering services in its region to promote and sustain economic development, small business development, and workforce development, in addition to a broad range of academic and cultural activities and events, and the shared use of facilities (libraries, theatres, galleries, etc.) and other types of institutional assets not available elsewhere in the region.

Institution	Type	CBHE Approved Mission
Three Rivers College	Two Year	Three Rivers College is a community college located in Poplar Bluff, Missouri. It is responsible for serving the residents of its taxing district and its CBHE-approved service area. Three Rivers College serves its CBHE-approved service region by offering academic programs leading to the Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and Associate of Arts in Teaching degrees, which transfer to four-year institutions, and postsecondary instruction in the liberal arts and sciences, and general education (including dual credit) that prepares students for transfer to four-year institutions. Three Rivers College also offers programs in career and technical education, leading to certificates and the Associate of Applied Science degree, and provides basic and workplace skills training for career preparation and advancement as well workforce skills training and customized training for businesses. Three Rivers College has particular strengths in nursing, education, criminal justice, and diesel mechanics. Three Rivers College further fulfills its CBHE-approved mission by offering services in its region to promote and sustain economic development, small business development, and workforce development, in addition to a broad range of academic and cultural activities and events, and the shared use of facilities (libraries, theatres, galleries, etc.) and other types of institutional assets not available elsewhere in the region.
State Technical College of Missouri	Two Year	State Technical College of Missouri, located in Linn, Missouri, is a special purpose institution with a statewide mission established in statute to make available to students from all areas of Missouri, exceptional educational opportunities through highly specialized and advanced technical education and training. State Technical College offers programs at the certificate and associate degree level in both emerging and traditional technologies with particular emphasis on technical and vocational programs not commonly offered by community colleges or area vocational technical schools. The college's primary consideration is on the industrial and technological manpower needs of the state. State Technical College is authorized to assist the state in economic development initiatives and to facilitate the transfer of technology to Missouri business and industry directly through the graduation of technicians in advanced and emerging disciplines and through technical assistance provided to business and industry. State Technical College is authorized to provide technical assistance to area vocational technical schools and community colleges through supplemental on-site instruction and distance learning as such area vocational technical schools and community colleges deem appropriate.

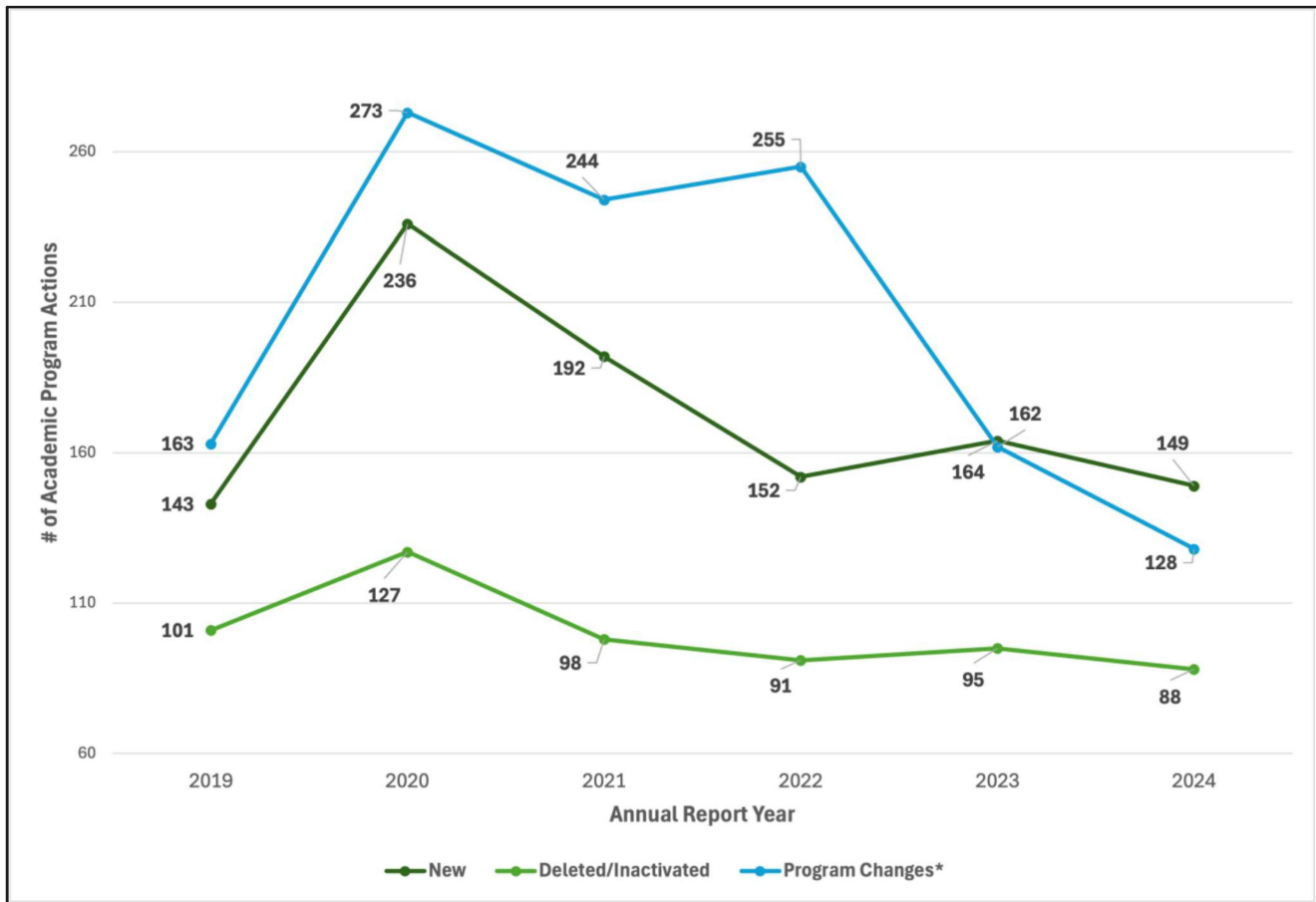
Institution	Type	CBHE Approved Mission
Lincoln University	Four Year	Lincoln University of Missouri, a historically black, 1890 land-grant, public, comprehensive institution, provides a diverse population access to excellent educational opportunities through teaching, research, and extension services within a nurturing, student-centered environment." Lincoln University is an 1890 land-grant institution with open enrollment to increase access to higher education in Missouri. Lincoln University also fulfills its land-grant mission by offering teaching, research and extension services to promote and sustain economic development, small business development, and workforce development with three farms, two urban impact centers, three rural outreach centers, a center on health and aging, collaborations with hospitals and demonstration sites around the state of Missouri. It has educators in both Urban Impact Centers in Kansas City and St. Louis, as well as outreach centers in Sikeston, Lilbourn, Caruthersville and Southeast Missouri. Lincoln University Cooperative Research supports high-quality research to address critical, emergent issues in agriculture and develop sustainable solutions to the problems farmers face. With an integration of education, research and Extension services, this nationally recognized program conducts a variety of multidisciplinary, cutting-edge research, through national and international collaborations. These mainly focus on animal science, plant science, food safety, natural resources and big data science or socioeconomics. Lincoln University fulfills its mission by offering select associate, baccalaureate and master's degrees in agriculture/natural resources, education, STEM, business, social sciences, social work, and health-related professions, appropriate to a comprehensive institution with an undergraduate and graduate student body. Lincoln University has particular strengths in nursing, liberal arts and sciences, business, agriculture and education. Lincoln University also fulfills its mission by offering services to promote and sustain economic development, small business development, and workforce development, in addition to a broad range of academic and cultural activities and events.
Missouri Southern State University	Four Year	Missouri Southern State University, located in Joplin, Missouri, is a regional university serving southwest Missouri and the surrounding area. Missouri Southern State University is designated as a moderately-selective enrollment institution. Missouri Southern State University serves its constituents by offering select certificates, associate, baccalaureate and master's degrees in the liberal arts and sciences, education, health sciences, business, social sciences, protective services, and humanities. MSSU has a statewide designation as an institution of international/global education. Missouri Southern State University has particular strengths in business, biology, criminal justice/protective and social services, education, and the health professions at the associate and baccalaureate levels. MSSU offers certificates in arts and sciences, education, law enforcement, business, and the health professions that can be pursued for professional development or can be applied as stackable credentials toward the baccalaureate degree. Missouri Southern State University fulfills its comprehensive mission by offering services to promote and sustain economic development, the PK-12 community, small business operations, and workforce readiness, in addition to offering a broad range of cultural enrichment opportunities.

Institution	Type	CBHE Approved Mission
University of Central Missouri	Four Year	The University of Central Missouri is a public, master's level, comprehensive regional university located in Warrensburg, Missouri. The University of Central Missouri is designated as a moderately selective institution. The University of Central Missouri is designated as the state's baccalaureate and master's degree granting institution in professional applied science and technology. The University of Central Missouri fulfills its mission by offering baccalaureate and master's degrees in the applied sciences appropriate to a teaching institution with a predominantly undergraduate student body. The University of Central Missouri also offers undergraduate and graduate certificates for use as stand-alone credentials in industry, or as stackable credentials toward degree completion. UCM has particular strengths in aviation, safety sciences, engineering technology, fine arts, criminal justice/law enforcement, nursing, education, biological sciences, management and marketing, cybersecurity, computer science, computer information systems, and data analytics. At the master's level, it has strengths in computer science/information technology, education, safety sciences, and business. The University of Central Missouri also fulfills its mission by offering services to promote and sustain economic development, and workforce development, in addition to a broad range of academic and cultural activities and events. The University of Central Missouri further serves the region through the Missouri Innovation Campus Program in collaboration with the Lee's Summit School District, Metropolitan Community College, and 65+ Kansas City area businesses. Students can participate in the high demand, high wage accelerated degree programs such as Design and Drafting, Computer Science and Information Systems, Software Development, Cybersecurity, Software Engineering, Computer Information Systems.
University of Missouri	Four Year	The University of Missouri-Columbia is the state's only public comprehensive research university. The University of Missouri-Columbia shoulders most of the responsibility for the university's 1862 land-grant mission. The University of Missouri is the only Missouri public institution of higher education authorized to offer doctor of philosophy degrees or first professional degrees. The University of Missouri-Columbia is designated as a selective institution. The University of Missouri-Columbia serves the state of Missouri by offering a broad range of baccalaureate, masters, doctoral, and professional programs that include the humanities, physical and social sciences, agriculture, journalism, information sciences, education, engineering, law, public administration, business, and the full array of health professions, including medicine. The University of Missouri-Columbia further serves the state through basic and applied research, and other services specifically designed to meet the state's economic development needs, as well as continuing professional education, technical and professional services, support of small businesses and entrepreneurs, and technology transfer. The University of Missouri-Columbia also fulfills its mission by offering services to promote and sustain economic development, small business development, and workforce development, in addition to a broad range of academic and cultural activities and events.

Note: CBHE Approved Mission are randomly selected examples are from the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development website. *CBHE-Approved Mission Descriptions*. (n.d.). Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development. Retrieved from <https://dhewd.mo.gov/higher-education/academic-affairs/CBHE-approved-mission-descriptions>

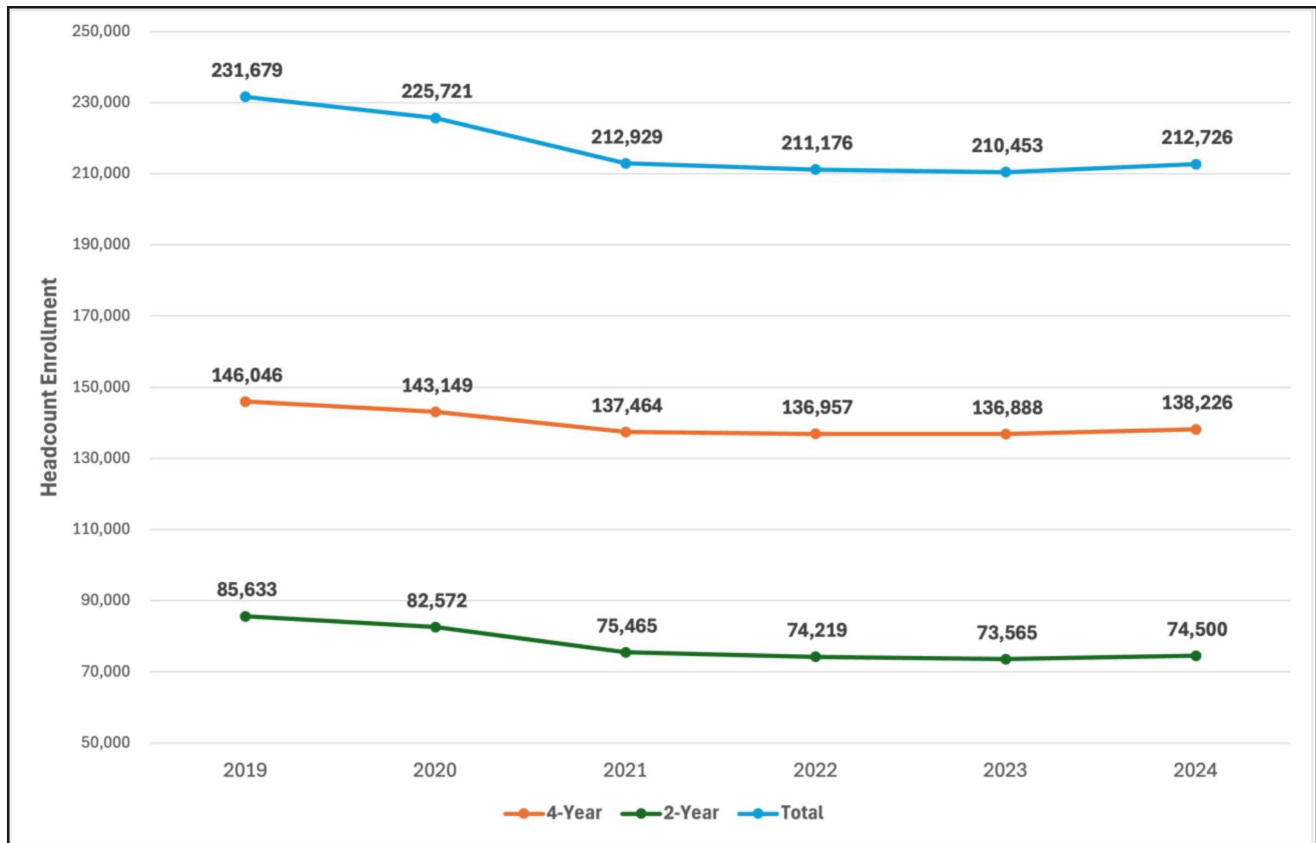
Appendix D: Missouri Program Activity and 2- and 4-Year Enrollment

Figure D1 Number of MDHEWD Academic Program Actions (2019-2024)



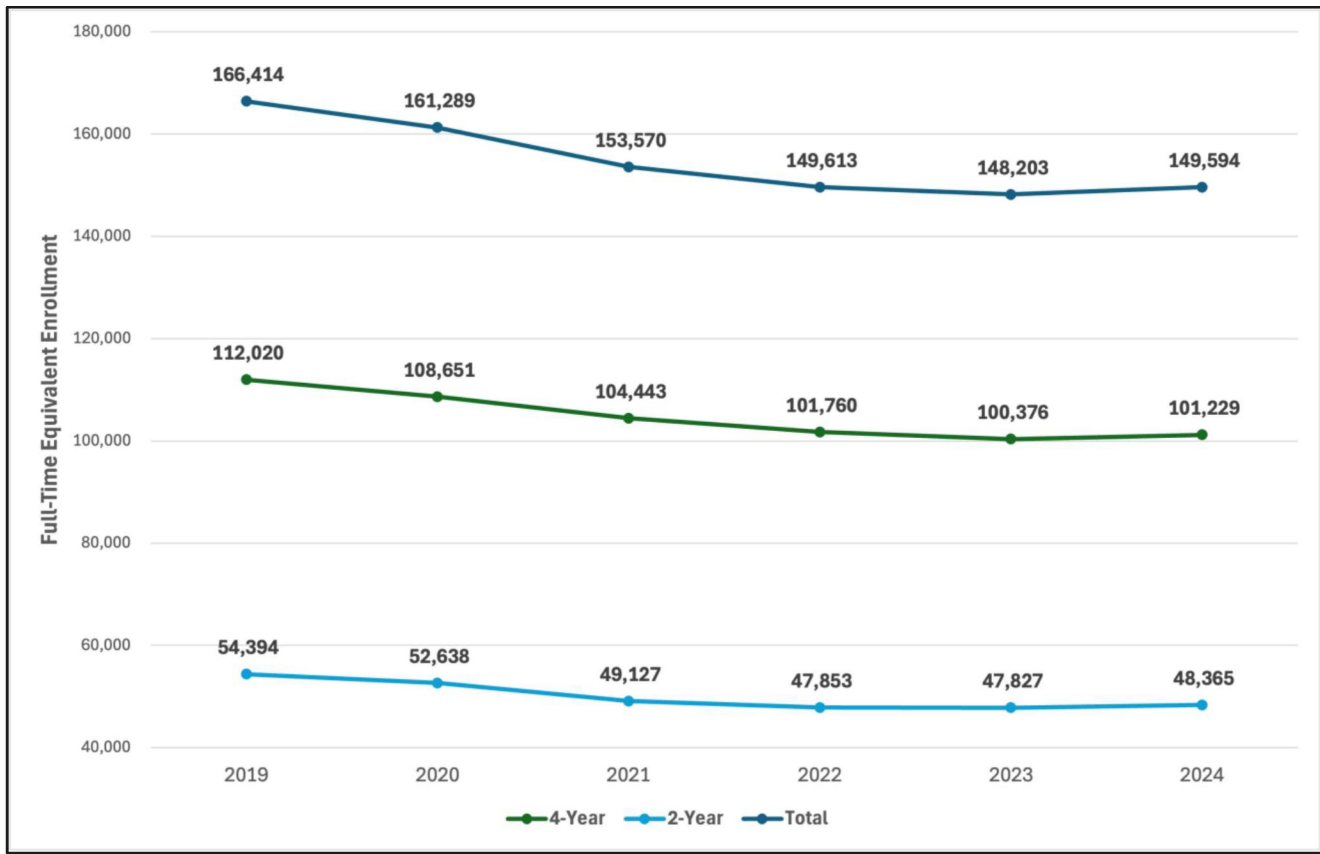
Note: The figure above represents academic program actions taken for Missouri's public institutions between 2019 and 2024. The data for # of Academic Program Actions are retrieved from MDHEWD's 2019 - 2024 annual reports retrieved from <https://dhewd.mo.gov/about/annual-reports>.

Figure D2 Missouri 2- and 4-Year Public Institution Headcount Enrollment (2019-2024)



Note: The figure above represents 2- and 4-year overall headcount enrollment totals for Missouri's public institutions between 2019 and 2024. The data for headcount enrollment are retrieved from MDHEWD's 2019 - 2024 annual reports retrieved from <https://dhewd.mo.gov/about/annual-reports>.

Figure D3 Missouri 2- and 4-Year Public Institution Full-Time Equivalent Enrollment (2019-2024)



Note: The figure above represents 2- and 4-year overall full-time equivalent enrollment totals for Missouri's public institutions between 2019 and 2024. The data for headcount enrollment are retrieved from MDHEWD's 2019 - 2024 annual reports retrieved from <https://dhewd.mo.gov/about/annual-reports>.

Appendix E: Example of Missouri New Academic Program Request Form



DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- ☐ PUBLIC
☐ INDEPENDENT

NEW PROGRAM PROPOSAL FOR ROUTINE REVIEW

Please use this form as a worksheet and submit new program information through the Academic Program Actions Portal
<https://web.dhewd.mo.gov/academicprogramaction/login.faces>

Sponsoring Institution:

Program Title:

Degree/Certificate:

If other, please list:

Options:

Delivery Site:

CIP Classification:

Implementation Date:

Is this a new off-site location? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, is the new location within your institution's current CBHE-approved service region? ☐

**If no, public institutions should consult the comprehensive review process*

Is this a collaborative program? ☐ Yes ☐ No

**If yes, please complete the collaborative programs form on last page.*

Please list similar or comparable programs at Missouri public institutions of higher education.

**For public institutions only*

CERTIFICATIONS:

- ☐ The program is within the institution's CBHE approved mission. *(public only)*
- ☐ The program will be offered within the institution's CBHE approved service region. *(public only)*
- ☐ The program builds upon existing programs and faculty expertise
- ☐ The program does not unnecessarily duplicate an existing program in the geographically-applicable area.
- ☐ The program can be launched with minimal expense and falls within the institution's current operating budget. *(public only)*

AUTHORIZATION

Name/Title of Institutional Officer	Signature	Date

MDHE New Program Proposal for Routine Review

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS AND PERFORMANCE GOALS

Although all of the following guidelines may not be applicable to the proposed program, please carefully consider the elements in each area and respond as completely as possible in the format below.

Quantification of performance goals should be included wherever possible.

1. Student Preparation

- Any special admissions procedures or student qualifications required for this program which exceed regular university admissions, standards, e.g., ACT score, completion of core curriculum, portfolio, personal interview, etc. Please note if no special preparation will be required.
[Click here to enter text](#)

- Characteristics of a specific population to be served, if applicable.
[Click here to enter text](#)

2. Faculty Characteristics

- Any special requirements (degree status, training, etc.) for assignment of teaching for this degree/certificate.
[Click here to enter text](#)

- Estimated percentage of credit hours that will be assigned to full time faculty. Please use the term "full time faculty" (and not FTE) in your descriptions here.
[Click here to enter text](#)

- Expectations for professional activities, special student contact, teaching/learning innovation.
[Click here to enter text](#)

3. Enrollment Projections

- Student FTE majoring in program by the end of five years.
[Click here to enter text](#)

- Percent of full time and part time enrollment by the end of five years.
[Click here to enter text](#)

STUDENT ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS

YEAR	1	2	3	4	5
Full Time					
Part Time					
Total					

4. Student and Program Outcomes

- Number of graduates per annum at three and five years after implementation.
[Click here to enter text](#)

- Special skills specific to the program.
[Click here to enter text](#)

- Proportion of students who will achieve licensing, certification, or registration.
[Click here to enter text](#)

- Performance on national and/or local assessments, e.g., percent of students scoring above the 50th percentile on normed tests; percent of students achieving minimal cut-scores on criterion-referenced tests. Include expected results on assessments of general education and on exit assessments in a particular discipline as well as the name of any nationally recognized assessments used.

[Click here to enter text](#)

- Placement rates in related fields, in other fields, unemployed.

[Click here to enter text](#)

- Transfer rates, continuous study.

[Click here to enter text](#)

5. Program Accreditation

- Institutional plans for accreditation, if applicable, including accrediting agency and timeline. If there are no plans to seek specialized accreditation, please provide rationale.

[Click here to enter text](#)

6. Program Structure

A. Total credits required for graduation: [Click here to enter text](#)

B. Residency requirements, if any:

[Click here to enter text](#)

C. General education: Total credits:

[Click here to enter text](#)

Courses (specific courses OR distribution area and credits)

Course Number	Credits	Course Title

D. Major requirements: Total credits: [Click here to enter text](#)

Course Number	Credits	Course Title

MDHE New Program Proposal for Routine Review

- 3 -

E. Free elective credits: [Click here to enter text](#)
(sum of C, D, and E should equal A)

F. Requirements for thesis, internship or other capstone experience:
[Click here to enter text](#)

G. Any unique features such as interdepartmental cooperation:
[Click here to enter text](#)

7. Need/Demand

☐ Student demand

☐ Market demand

☐ Societal demand

☐ I hereby certify that the institution has conducted research on the feasibility of the proposal and it is likely the program will be successful.

On July 1, 2011, the Coordinating Board for Higher Education began provisionally approving all new programs with a subsequent review and consideration for full approval after five years.

COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMS

- **Sponsoring Institution One:**
- **Sponsoring Institution Two:**
- **Other Collaborative Institutions:**
- **Length of Agreement:**
- **Which institution(s) will have degree-granting authority?**
- **Which institution(s) will have the authority for faculty hiring, course assignment, evaluation and reappointment decisions?**
- **What agreements exist to ensure that faculty from all participating institutions will be involved in decisions about the curriculum, admissions standards, exit requirements?**
- **Which institution(s) will be responsible for academic and student-support services, e.g., registration, advising, library, academic assistance, financial aid, etc.?**
- **What agreements exist to ensure that the academic calendars of the participating institutions have been aligned as needed?**

Appendix F: Interview Recruitment Email – Missouri Stakeholders

Hello <NAME>,

I hope you're well!

Doctoral students at Vanderbilt University are partnering with the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (MDHEWD) to analyze processes for the public two- and four-year postsecondary academic program approvals and how these programs are reviewed for efficacy. Specifically, to understand how these approval procedures can support Missouri and its institutions in responding to workforce needs and meeting student demand; while maintaining a process that is simplistic and agile for institutions to easily complete.

Because of your role as XYZ, we want your input via a virtual 30-45 minute interview. All participants and their responses to questions will remain anonymous.

If you are willing to participate, please use the booking link to setup an interview day and time - <LINK>.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[CAPSTONE TEAM MEMBER EMAIL SIGNATURE]

Appendix G: Interview Recruitment Email – Surrounding States

Hello <NAME>,

Hope you're well!

We are doctoral students at Vanderbilt University partnering with the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (MDHEWD) to analyze processes for post-secondary academic program approval and review. Notably, how these approval procedures can support states in responding to workforce needs, and meet student demand, while maintaining a process that is simplistic and agile for institutions to complete.

In your role as ____ at ____, we have identified you as an informed stakeholder in academic approval processes for your state. We value your input and would like to schedule a virtual 45-60 minute interview. All participants and their responses will go through de-identification to remain anonymous.

If you are willing to participate, please use the following booking link - <LINK>.

Also, if you believe we should be speaking with someone else in your area we'd love to be connected with them as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[CAPSTONE TEAM MEMBER EMAIL SIGNATURE]

Appendix H: Combined Interview Protocols (Missouri Stakeholders, Connecting States)

Missouri - Chief Academic Officer

Interview Protocol

Introduction: Interviewer name, program and institution studying, and where you currently reside.

Recording Interview Statement: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. As part of this process, I would like to inform you that this virtual meeting will be recorded to ensure accuracy in capturing your responses. The recording will only be used for the purposes of this study and the recording, and your responses will be kept confidential. You can withdraw your consent at any time, and if you choose not to proceed, the recording will be deleted immediately.

By continuing with this interview, you consent to the recording of this conversation. If you do not agree to being recorded, please let me know before we proceed.

Ice Breaker:

- *If able to identify an object in the office, ask about it... ex:* That is a nice photo of the beach, do you visit there often? Which beach is your favorite?

Participant Background:

In this section, I am going to ask some information just about your background.

- What is your current role/position at the university/college?
- How would you describe your role? Its responsibilities?
- How many years do you have within the profession? How many years have you been at the university/college?
- Which best describes your institution?
 - 2-year, public; or 4-year, public
- What types of academic programs does your institution currently offer?

Academic Program Approval Process:

In this section, I am going to ask some information regarding general information related to the practice of establishing an academic program.

- What elements do you consider important in the academic program approval process?
 - Do you consider projected future enrollment demand in the state/region?
- How do your academic program approval requests align with workforce and industry needs?

- What evidence do you use to support student interest and enrollment potential for a new academic program?
- When submitting a new academic program, how do you consider other similar programs that are currently offered within the state?
 - If similar one(s) exist, how would this one differentiate from current offerings provided at other state public institutions?
- What are the biggest challenges or pain points in an academic approval process?
- What campus policies or procedures related to academic program approval do you believe contribute to achieving the institution's mission?

Academic Program Review Processes:

In this section, I am going to ask some information regarding general information related to the practice of monitoring the success of an academic program once it has been established.

- What elements do you consider important in the academic program review process?
 - Do you consider projected enrollment demand in the state/region?
- How do your academic program review practices align with workforce and industry needs?
- What evidence do you use to support student interest and enrollment trends for an existing academic program?
- Have you had any experience with sunseting an academic program due to decline in student interest?
- Have you had any experience with sunseting an academic program due to decline in workforce demand?
- What are the biggest challenges or pain points in an academic program review process?
- What campus policies or procedures related to academic program review do you believe contribute to achieving the institution's mission?

CBHE ACADEMIC PROGRAM APPROVAL PROCESSES:

For this next group of questions, I am going to ask about the Coordinating Board for Higher Education's Academic Program Approval Processes and your experience with submitting academic program proposals for approval.

- Has your institution submitted an academic program approval request to the Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE) on you or your department's behalf?

- Can you tell me about the type of academic program request you submitted?
 - Was it Staff Review, Routine Review, or Comprehensive Review?
- Are you familiar with the state’s policy regarding academic program approval?
 - How well do you understand the requirements and steps outlined in the policy?
 - Do you know where to go for help if you run into issues navigating the policy?
- How familiar are you with the MDHEWD’s “Building Missouri’s Future” strategic plan goal of achieving 60% of educational attainment by 2030?
 - Do you believe the current CBHE Academic Program Approval practices support the state’s goal to achieve 60% educational attainment by 2030?
 - What changes do you believe would be necessary to support achieving 60% educational attainment by 2030?
- Describe an experience you had with submitting a new academic program for approval with the CBHE?
 - How long does it take for your state to process and provide a decision on your academic program approval process?
- Has your department had an academic program request denied by the CBHE?
- What aspects of the current CBHE academic program process do you find challenging?
- Do you believe the current CBHE academic program processes provide your institution the ability to create academic programs to meet the needs of Missouri’s workforce?
- Do you believe the current academic program approval processes support Missouri with increasing its college-going rate?

CBHE ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESSES:

For this next group of questions, I am going to ask about the Coordinating Board for Higher Education’s Academic Program Review Processes and your experience with the review of academic programs.

- How does the CBHE support institutions with review and monitoring of existing academic programs?
- Describe the role the CBHE should provide institutions regarding assessing existing academic program enrollment demand in the state/region.
- Does the current CBHE academic program review processes support the state of Missouri in providing quality instruction?

- What about responding to changes in industry and economic trends?
- What about providing social, cultural, and intellectual growth for students?
- Do the current practices provide clearly defined metrics for measuring academic program success?

Final Questions:

Thanks for taking this time to interview regarding this capstone project. Before wrapping up, I want to ask you two final questions.

- What do you believe is missing from Missouri's Academic Program Approval and Review Process?
- Is there anything else you would like to share regarding Missouri's academic program approval and review processes?

If you have any further questions regarding this capstone project or interview, please email me. Thank you again for your time and input on the Coordinating Board for Higher Education's Academic Program Approval and Review Process.

MDHEWD/Coordinating Board for Higher Education

Interview Protocol

Introduction: Interviewer name, program and institution studying, and where you currently reside.

Recording Interview Statement: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. As part of this process, I would like to inform you that this virtual meeting will be recorded to ensure accuracy in capturing your responses. The recording will only be used for the purposes of this study and the recording, and your responses will be kept confidential. You can withdraw your consent at any time, and if you choose not to proceed, the recording will be deleted immediately.

By continuing with this interview, you consent to the recording of this conversation. If you do not agree to being recorded, please let me know before we proceed.

Ice Breaker:

- *If able to identify an object in the office, ask about it.. ex:* That is a nice photo of the beach, do you visit there often? Which beach is your favorite?

Participant Background:

In this section, I am going to ask some information just about your background.

- What is your current role/position at MDHEWD?
- How would you describe your role? Its responsibilities?
- How many years do you have within the profession? How many years have you been at the MDHEWD or serving with the CBHE?

Academic Program Approval Process:

In this section, I am going to ask some information regarding general information related to the practice of establishing an academic program.

- What elements do you consider important in the academic program approval process?
 - Do you consider projected future enrollment demand in the state/region as a critical component?
- How do academic program approval requests received align with workforce and industry needs?
- What evidence do you use to support student interest and enrollment potential for a new academic program?
- When reviewing new academic programs, what factors are considered for a program to be approved?
 - If there are similar academic programs that are currently offered within the state, how does the review and approval practices differ?
 - If similar academic programs exist, what factors may result in the disapproval of the academic program requested?
- What policies or procedures related to academic program approval do you believe contribute to achieving the state's mission with higher education?
- What policies or procedures related to academic program approval do you believe contribute to achieving the state's mission with workforce development?
- What are the biggest challenges or pain points in an academic approval process?
- Based on the MDHEWD's "Building Missouri's Future" strategic plan, do you believe the current state policies related to academic program approval and review support the goals of this strategic plan?
 - What changes do you believe would be necessary to support achieving 60% educational attainment by 2030?

Academic Program Review Processes:

In this section, I am going to ask some information regarding general information related to the practice of monitoring the success of an academic program once it has been established.

- What elements do you consider important in the academic program review process?
 - Do you consider projected enrollment demand in the state/region?
- How do your academic program review practices of existing programs align with the state's workforce and industry needs?
- What evidence do you use to support student interest and enrollment trends for an existing academic program?
- What is the MDHEWD or CBHE role with sunseting an academic program due to decline in student interest/enrollment?
- What is the MDHEWD or CBHE role with sunseting an academic program due to decline in workforce demand?
- What policies or procedures related to academic program review do you believe contribute to achieving the state's mission with higher education?
- What policies or procedures related to academic program review do you believe contribute to achieving the state's mission with workforce development?
- What are the biggest challenges or pain points in an academic program review process?

CBHE ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESSES:

For this next group of questions, I am going to ask about the Coordinating Board for Higher Education's Academic Program Review Processes and your experience with the review of academic programs.

- How does the CBHE support institutions with review and monitoring of existing academic programs?
- Describe the role the CBHE should provide institutions regarding assessing existing academic program enrollment demand in the state/region.
- Does the current CBHE academic program review processes support the state of Missouri in providing quality instruction?
 - What about responding to changes in industry and economic trends?
 - What about providing social, cultural, and intellectual growth for students?

- Do the current practices provide clearly defined metrics for measuring academic program success?
- What about the current practice do you believe benefits
- What aspects of the current CBHE academic program process do you find challenging?
- What aspects of the current CBHE academic program process do you believe institutions find challenging?
- Do you believe the current CBHE academic program processes provide the state of Missouri the ability to create academic programs to meet the needs of its workforce?
- Do you believe the current CBHE academic program processes provide the state of Missouri the ability to increase its college-going rate?
 - What about its college-completion rate?

Final Questions:

Thanks for taking this time to interview regarding this capstone project. Before wrapping up, I want to ask you two final questions.

- What do you believe is missing from Missouri's Academic Program Approval and Review Process?
- Is there anything else you would like to share regarding Missouri's academic program approval and review processes?

If you have any further questions regarding this capstone project or interview, please email me. Thank you again for your time and input on the Coordinating Board for Higher Education's Academic Program Approval and Review Process.

Missouri - Academic Department Chair/Program Director

Interview Protocol

Introduction: Interviewer name, program and institution studying, and where you currently reside.

Recording Interview Statement: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. As part of this process, I would like to inform you that this virtual meeting will be recorded to ensure accuracy in capturing your responses. The recording will only be used for the purposes of this study and the recording, and your responses will be kept confidential. You can withdraw your consent at any time, and if you choose not to proceed, the recording will be deleted immediately.

By continuing with this interview, you consent to the recording of this conversation. If you do not agree to being recorded, please let me know before we proceed.

Ice Breaker:

- *If able to identify an object in the office, ask about it.. ex:* That is a nice photo of the beach, do you visit there often? Which beach is your favorite?

Participant Background:

In this section, I am going to ask some information just about your background.

- What is your current role/position at the university/college?
- How would you describe your role? Its responsibilities?
- How many years do you have within the profession? How many years have you been at the university/college?
- Which best describes your institution?
 - 2-year, public; or 4-year, public
- What types of academic programs does your institution currently offer?

Academic Program Approval Process:

In this section, I am going to ask some information regarding general information related to the practice of establishing an academic program.

- What elements do you consider important in the academic program approval process?
 - Do you consider projected future enrollment demand in the state/region?
- How do your academic program approval requests align with workforce and industry needs?
- What evidence do you use to support student interest and enrollment potential for a new academic program?
- When submitting a new academic program, how do you consider other similar programs that are currently offered within the state?
 - If similar one(s) exist, how would this proposal differentiate from current program offerings provided at other state public institutions?
- What are the biggest challenges or pain points in an academic approval process?
- What campus policies or procedures related to academic program approval do you believe contribute to achieving the institution's mission?

Academic Program Review Processes:

In this section, I am going to ask some information regarding general information related to the practice of monitoring the success of an academic program once it has been established.

- What elements do you consider important in the academic program review process?
 - Do you consider projected enrollment demand in the state/region?
- How do your academic program review practices align with workforce and industry needs?
- What evidence do you use to support student interest and enrollment trends for an existing academic program?
- Have you had any experience with sunseting an academic program due to decline in student interest?
- Have you had any experience with sunseting an academic program due to decline in workforce demand?
- What are the biggest challenges or pain points in an academic program review process?
- What campus policies or procedures related to academic program review do you believe contribute to achieving the institution's mission?

CBHE ACADEMIC PROGRAM APPROVAL PROCESSES:

For this next group of questions, I am going to ask about the Coordinating Board for Higher Education's Academic Program Approval Processes and your experience with submitting academic program proposals for approval.

- Has your institution submitted an academic program review request to the Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE) on you or your department's behalf?
 - Can you tell me about the type of academic program request you submitted?
 - Was it Staff Review, Routine Review, or Comprehensive Review?
- Are you familiar with the state's policy regarding academic program approval?
 - How well do you understand the requirements and steps outlined in the policy?
 - Do you know where to go for help if you run into issues navigating the policy?
- How familiar are you with the MDHEWD's "Building Missouri's Future" strategic plan goal of achieving 60% of educational attainment by 2030?
 - Do you believe the current CBHE Academic Program Approval practices support the state's goal to achieve 60% educational attainment by 2030?

- What changes do you believe would be necessary to support achieving 60% educational attainment by 2030?
- Describe an experience you had with submitting a new academic program for approval with the CBHE?
 - How long does it take for your state to process and provide a decision on your academic program approval process?
- Has your department had an academic program request denied by the CBHE?
- What aspects of the current CBHE academic program process do you find challenging?
- Do you believe the current CBHE academic program processes provide your institution the ability to create academic programs to meet the needs of Missouri's workforce?
- Do you believe the current academic program approval processes support Missouri with increasing its college-going rate?

CBHE ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESSES:

For this next group of questions, I am going to ask about the Coordinating Board for Higher Education's Academic Program Review Processes and your experience with the review of academic programs.

- How does the CBHE support institutions with review and monitoring of existing academic programs?
- Describe the role the CBHE should provide institutions regarding assessing existing academic program enrollment demand in the state/region.
- Does the current CBHE academic program review processes support the state of Missouri in providing quality instruction?
 - What about responding to changes in industry and economic trends?
 - What about providing social, cultural, and intellectual growth for students?
 - Do the current practices provide clearly defined metrics for measuring academic program success?

Final Questions:

Thanks for taking this time to interview regarding this capstone project. Before wrapping up, I want to ask you two final questions.

- What do you believe is missing from Missouri's Academic Program Approval and Review Process?

- Is there anything else you would like to share regarding Missouri's academic program approval and review processes?

If you have any further questions regarding this capstone project or interview, please email me. Thank you again for your time and input on the Coordinating Board for Higher Education's Academic Program Approval and Review Process.

External State Higher Education Departments

Interview Protocol

Introduction: Interviewer name, program and institution studying, and where you currently reside.

Ice Breaker:

- I have been speaking with a variety of state offices, what is something you love about your state or makes it unique?

Participant Background:

In this section, I will ask for some information about your background.

- What is your current role/position at the _ (office/department)?
- How would you describe your role? What are your responsibilities?
- How many years do you have within the profession? How many years have you been at the _ (office/department)?

Academic Program Approval Process:

In this section, I am going to ask for some information regarding your state's approach to the academic program approval process:

- How would you summarize your state's role in the academic program approvals?
 - What process(es) do you utilize?
 - What components does your state approval process entail?
 - Are there any tools or technology you rely on?
- How does your academic program review practice align and/or account for your state workforce and industry needs?
 - What policies or procedures related to academic program approval do you believe contribute to achieving the state's mission with workforce development?

- Why does your state do an academic approval process?
- What elements do you consider most important in the review process (projected future demand in the state/region, alignment with workforce and industry needs, evidence of student interest and enrollment potential for the program, what other similar programs are currently offered, how it differentiates from current offerings, fills a gap in the current academic program landscape, resource availability – faculty, facilities, infrastructure, funding sources, fit with strategic priorities)?
- What are you hoping to see in academic program submission?
- Who in your state creates or outlines the academic approval process?
- Who in your state reviews academic program submissions?
 - Who in your state approves academic program submissions?
- When reviewing new academic programs, what factors are considered for a program to be approved?
- What are the biggest challenges or pain points in your academic approval process?
- What do you believe is missing from your state's Program Approval and Review Process?

Academic Program Review State Experience:

The following questions will ask about the academic program approval process coordination with your state institutions:

- How long does it typically take an institution to complete the program approval submission process?
- How long does it take for your state to process and decide on a new academic program approval process?
- What types of feedback has your department received from your state institutions?
- What aspects of the current academic program approval process do you believe institutions find challenging?
- Do you charge states to submit new academic programs or make changes?
 - If so, why do you charge these fees? What are the funds used for?
- Do you provide an opportunity for institutions to offer feedback or concerns regarding other's academic program submissions?
- If there are similar academic programs offered within the state, how do the review and approval practices differ?

- If similar academic programs exist, what factors may result in the disapproval of the academic program requested?

Academic Program Review Processes:

In this section, I am going to ask for some information regarding your practice of monitoring the success of academic programs once they have been established.

- How does ____ (state) support institutions with review and monitoring of existing academic programs?
- Describe the role ____ (state) provides institutions regarding assessing existing academic program enrollment demand in the state/region.
- What is ____ (state) role with sunseting an academic program due to decline in student interest/enrollment?
 - What is ____ (state) role with sunseting an academic program due to decline in workforce demand?

Final Questions:

Thanks for taking this time to interview regarding this capstone project. Before wrapping up, I want to ask you some final concluding questions.

- Are there any approaches or processes from states you'd like to duplicate?
- Do you believe the academic program review process is necessary? If so, what value does it offer? If not, what is the incentive to continue to do it?
- What policies or procedures related to academic program approval do you believe contribute to achieving the state's mission and vision for higher education?
- Is there anything else you would like to share regarding ____ (state)'s academic program approval and review processes?

If you have any further questions regarding this capstone project or interview, please email me. Thank you again for your time and input on your state's Higher Education's Academic Program Approval and Review Process.

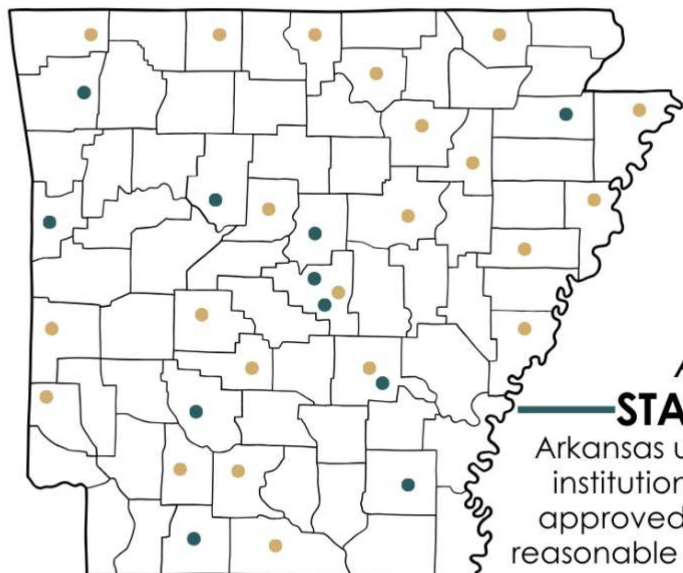
Appendix I: Neighboring State Information Table

State	Approving Body		Website	Policies	Staff Size	Public Institutions (4y/2yr)	SARA Member
	Approving Body Type						
Arkansas	Arkansas Division of Higher Education						
	Coordinating		https://adhe.edu/institutions/academic-affairs	Arkansas Code Annotated §6-61-208	3	11/22	Yes
Illinois	Illinois Board of Higher Education						
	Coordinating		https://www.ibhe.org/aamain.html	23 Illinois Administrative Code 1050	5	12/48	Yes
Iowa (4 Year)	Iowa Board of Regents						
	Governing		https://www.iowaregents.edu/plans-and-policies/board-policy-manual/36-academic-program-planning-approval	Board Policy Manual 3.6	3	3/0	Yes
Iowa (2 Year)	Iowa Department of Higher Education						
	Coordinating		https://educate.iowa.gov/highered/community-colleges/program-approval	Iowa Administration Code 281-260C	7	0/15	Yes
Kansas (4 Year)	Kansas Board of Regents						
	Governing		https://www.kansasregents.gov/academic_affairs/new_program_approval	Kansas Board of Regents Policy Manual Chpt.2 Section A7	4	6/0	Yes
Kansas (2 Year)	Kansas Board of Regents						
	Coordinated		https://www.kansasregents.gov/academic_affairs/new_program_approval	Kansas Board of Regents Policy Manual Chpt.3 Section 5	12	0/26	Yes
Kentucky	Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education						
	Coordinating		https://cpe.ky.gov/ourwork/academic-programapproval.html	KRS 164.020 § 15-16	3	8/16	Yes
Missouri	Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development						
	Coordinating		https://dhewd.mo.gov/	Missouri Revised Statutes Chapter 173 Department of Higher Education Section 173.005.	6	13/14	Yes
Nebraska	Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary education						
	Coordinating		https://ccpe.nebraska.gov/legal-and-regulatory	Title 281- Chapter 4 EDUCATION Chpt. 4	1	7/6	Yes
Oklahoma	Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education						
	Coordinating		https://okhighered.org/admin-fac/academic-forms/	Chapter 3 Academic Affairs Policy 3.4	3	15/14	Yes
Tennessee	Tennessee Higher Education Commission						
	Coordinating		https://www.tn.gov/thec/for-institutions/program-approval-and-academic-policies/academic-policies-checklists-and-forms.html	Academic Policy A1.0	4	10/13	Yes

State	Reasons for Program Approval & Review	NAPP Submission Medium		Application Components
		NOI/LOI		
Arkansas	Student ROI, Safeguard Tax Payer Funds, Support Institutions, Institution Accountability	LOI/LON	PDF Forms>AK Online System	General Description of the Program, Proof of Need & Student Demand, Program Goals, Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes, Program Curriculum and Course descriptions, List of Program Faculty, Description of Program Resources, Program budget, Program Duplication, Institutional Program Viability, Institutional/Board of Trustees Approval of Program
	Student Consumer Protections, Student ROI, Workforce Growth	NOI	IBHE Online System	Degree Title & Region, Background, Institutional Data, Need (Workforce Data), Relevance to A Thriving Illinois (Higher Education Strategic Plan), Comparable Programs, Mission and Objectives, Curriculum & Assessment, Facilities, Faculty & Staff, Fiscal and Personnel Resources, Accreditation and Licensure, Program Information
Iowa (4 Year)	Student ROI, Support Institutions, Institution Accountability	NOI	Word Document>Email	Institution, Title, Degree, Delivery Mode, Establishing Date, Description, objectives, relevance to mission and strategic plan, connection to other institution programs, institutions qualifications, personnel/facilities/equipment, Student Demand, Projected Enrollment, Workforce Need, Communication with other Deans, Duplications, Accreditation, Additional Delivery Mode Accreditation, Articulation Agreements, Experiential Learning, Resources/Budgets, Justification
	Student ROI, Institution Accountability, Prevent Unnecessary Duplication	NOI	State of Iowa Curriculum System (STICS)	Notice of Intent, Labor Market Need, Advisory Council for Curriculum, Program Description, Discipline Consultant, Duplications, Labor Market Information, Articulation Agreements, Business & Industry Partners, Program Details, Benchmarks
Kansas (4 Year)	State Statute, Prevent Duplication, Institution Accountability, Safeguard Taxpayer Funds, Student ROI	NPPF	PDF Forms>Email	Institution, Program Identification (e.g. Degree Level, Title, CIP Code, Modality), Clinical Sites, Justification, Program Demand, Survey of Student Interest, Market Analysis, Projected Enrollment for the Initial Three Years, Employment, Admission and Curriculum, Core Faculty, Expenditures and Funding Sources with Explanations, References
	Funding Allocation, Prevent Unnecessary Duplication	NPRF	PDF Forms>Email	General Information (Institution, proposed program, Delivery method, CIP code, Standard Occupation Code, Proposed Date, accrediting agency, etc.), Narrative, Explanation of Duplication of Existing Programs, Program Information, Faculty Requirements, Cost and Funding for Proposed Program, Program Review and Assessment, Program Approval at Institutional Level, Program Proposal Submission
Kentucky	Student ROI, Support Institutions, State Statute, Prevent Unnecessary Duplication	NOI	Kentucky Postsecondary Education Data System (KPEDS)	Institution, Program Name, Degree Level, Degree Designation, CIP code, Program Type, Proposed Implementation Date, Institutional Contact Information, Date of Governing Board Approval
	Student ROI, Support Institutions, Institution Accountability, Workforce Growth, Prevent Unnecessary Duplication, State Statute	NPPRR	Academic Program Actions Web Portal	Sponsoring Institution, Program Title, Degree Certificate, Delivery Site, CIP Classification, Implementation Date, Site Location, Collaboration status, Comparable Programs, Certifications, Student Preparation, Faculty Characteristics, Enrollment Projections, Student and Program Outcomes, Program Accreditation, Program Structure, Need/Demand
Nebraska	Student ROI, Institution Accountability, Safeguard Taxpayer Resources, Prevent Unnecessary Duplication, Support institutions	NPP	PDF Forms>Email	Institution Name, Program Name, Degrees, Similar Programs Offered by institution, CIP Code, Administrative Units, Proposed Delivery Site, Date Approved by Governing Board, Proposed Start Date, Credit Hours, Purpose, Relevance to Mission, Need and Demand, Adequacy of Resources (Faculty, Facilities, Budget Projections, Avoidance of Unnecessary Duplication), Alignment with Statewide Plan
	Student ROI, Workforce Growth	LOI	SmartSheets	Letter of Intent (LOI): Institution Name, Official Degree Designation, Program Title, Location, Method of Delivery, Contact Information for Chief Academic Officer, Description of Proposed Program, Employment Demand for Program, Unmet Need for Proposed Program
Tennessee	Student Consumer Protections, Student ROI, Workforce Growth, Support Institutions, Institutional Accountability	LON	Formstack & LeanKit	Institution, Program Name, Degree Designation, CIP Code, Reviewer Recommendations, Letter of Notification, Implementation Timeline, Student Interest and Community Partnerships, Curriculum, Projected Costs and Revenues for Proposed Program, Institutional Resources, Appendices (Letters of Support, Financial Projections)

State	App Req.								Performance Based Funding
	Institution Review Period	Approval Time (typical)	Use of Industry Experts	Data Market Analysis	Encourage Partnerships	Charge for Submission	Review for Transferability	Program Review	
Arkansas	60 Days	4-6 Months	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Program Viability: 3 Year Average on Graduation Program Review: Comprehensive review every 7-10 years	Yes, Less than 50%
Illinois	30 Days	9-12 Months	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Public Institutions submit yearly reports to IBHW. Initial report is submitted three years following approval, and then on an 8 year cycle	No
Iowa (4 Year)	90 Days	2-3 Months	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Institutions do independently yearly reviews, and submit data every seven years per an academic program.	No
Iowa (2 Year)	14 Days	2-3 Months	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Colleges do independent evaluation of programs and the state require each program must be reviewed every 5 years	No
Kansas (4 Year)	45 Days	3-4 Months	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Currently in a four year process where all programs will be reviewed on the basis of four quantitative metrics. Also currently collecting information on institution's unique program review processes.	Yes
Kansas (2 Year)	10 Days	2-3 Months	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Institutions outline their internal review process in program proposal, KS then reviews Kansas Training Information Program (KTIP) data on a three-year rolling basis.	Yes
Kentucky	30 Days	4-5 Months	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Institutions provide early report of all programs classified as either: sunset, fixed, sustain, or grow. CPE reviews these along with student and market demand.	Yes, Less than 50%
Missouri	20 Days	1-7 Months	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Missouri monitors and reviews existing academic programs. However, much of the academic program review process is managed by Missouri's institutions.	No
Nebraska	90 Days	3-5 Months	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Institutions submit a report to CCPE every 7 years on the 5 Year Average of program data, along with a brief statement of need.	No
Oklahoma	2 Weeks	2-3 Months	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	New Programs are provisionally approved until 12 students enrolled/5 graduates/within 3 years. Programs then enter a review cycle that can be every 5 years or align with accreditation	No
Tennessee	15 Days	4-12 Months	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Institutions report program data on enrollment and graduation as well as 2 additional criteria they could select from options such as: Student Success, Program Productivity, Work partnerships, etc.	Yes, Less than 50%

Appendix J: Neighboring State Individual Profiles



ARKANSAS

Division of Higher Education

Coordinating Board
adhe.edu

Arkansas Code Annotated §6-61-208

STATE APPROACH SPOTLIGHT

Arkansas utilizes a streamlined two prong approach for institution submissions. A **letter of notification**, which is approved by the commissioner, allows for modest and reasonable changes to existing programs. A **letter of intent** paired with a program proposal, which is approved by the coordinating board, allows for the creation of new academic programs.

PUBLIC INSTITUTION COUNT:

- Four Year: 11 • Two Year: 22

MOTIVATIONS



Student ROI



Safeguard Tax
Payer Funds



Support
Institutions



Institutional
Accountability

USE OF TECHNOLOGY



PDF Forms > AR Online
System

REQUIRED COMPONENTS IN NEW PROGRAM APPLICATION:

General Description of the Program, Proof of Need & Student Demand, Program Goals, Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes, Program Curriculum and Course descriptions, List of Program Faculty, Description of Program Resources, Program budget, Program Duplication, Institutional Program Viability, Institutional/Board of Trustees Approval of Program



PROVE WORKFORCE DEMAND



TRANSFERABILITY



ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION



USE OF INDUSTRY EXPERTS FOR REVIEW



CHARGE FOR NEW SUBMISSIONS



4-6

MONTHS

Average Program
Processing Time
to Approval

60

DAYS

Institution
Feedback Period

PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS:

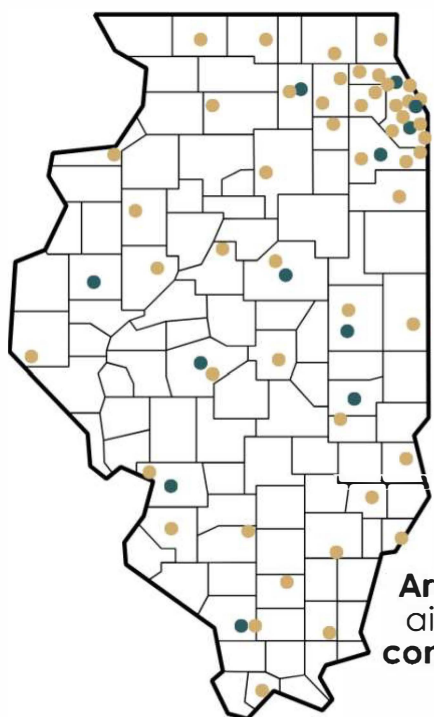
- **Program Viability: 3 Year Average on Graduation**
Can influence recommendations to sunset programs
- **Program Review: State level policy requires comprehensive review every 7-10 years**
Accept third party accreditation as a review

Informs
Performance
Based
Funding



STATE APPROACH TO DUPLICATION CONCERNS:

- Transparency through statewide notification
- Objections & concerns brought to the Coordinating Board
- Board hears commentary from both to address concerns
- Decisions often based on necessary vs unnecessary duplication



PUBLIC INSTITUTION COUNT:

- Four Year: 12
- Two Year: 48

ILLINOIS

Board of Higher Education

Coordinating Board
ibhe.org

23 Illinois Administrative Code 1050

STATE APPROACH SPOTLIGHT

Public institutions in Illinois are required to, and Private institutions able to apply to, participate in the **Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI)**. This **statewide articulation agreement** aims to streamline the transfer process for students by **ensuring comparable course quality and numbers**. IAI is transferable among more than 100 participating colleges and universities in IL.



Student ROI

MOTIVATIONS



Workforce
Growth



Student Consumer
Protections

TECHNOLOGY



IBHE Online System

REQUIRED COMPONENTS IN NEW PROGRAM APPLICATION:

Degree Title & Region, Background, Institutional Data, Need (Workforce Data), Relevance to A Thriving Illinois (Higher Education Strategic Plan), Comparable Programs, Mission and Objectives, Curriculum & Assessment, Facilities, Faculty & Staff, Fiscal and Personnel Resources, Accreditation and Licensure, Program Information



PROVE WORKFORCE DEMAND



TRANSFERABILITY



ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION



USE OF INDUSTRY EXPERTS FOR REVIEW



CHARGE FOR NEW SUBMISSIONS



9-12
MONTHS

Average Program
Processing Time
to Approval

30

DAYS

Institution
Feedback Period

PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS:

Public Institutions submit yearly reports to IBHE for programs in the review period. The initial report is submitted three years following approval, and then on an 8 year cycle to follow.

Informs
Performance
Based
Funding



STATE APPROACH TO DUPLICATION CONCERNS:

- Institutions must inventory comparison programs within the service region and estimate impact.
- Analysis into need and demand, and if jobs can be found in this field after completing the proposed program.

IOWA

Board of Regents

*Governing Board
for Four Year Institutions
iowaregents.edu*

Board Policy Manual 3.6

STATE APPROACH SPOTLIGHT

PUBLIC INSTITUTION COUNT:

- Four Year: 3

Iowa **does not regulate** institution **certificate programs or minors**. Instead encouraging universities to use this as an **innovation space** for **potential new programs**.

 MOTIVATIONS Student ROI  Support Institutions  Institutional Accountability			 TECHNOLOGY Word Document > Email
---	--	--	---

REQUIRED COMPONENTS IN NEW PROGRAM APPLICATION:

Institution, Title, Degree, Delivery Mode, Establishing Date, Description, objectives, relevance to mission and strategic plan, connection to other institution programs, institutions qualifications, personnel/facilities/equipment, Student Demand, Projected Enrollment, Workforce Need, Communication with other Deans, Duplications, Accreditation, Additional Delivery Mode Accreditation, Articulation Agreements (if Applicable), Experiential Learning, Resources/Budgets, Justification

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☒ PROVE WORKFORCE DEMAND | ☒ TRANSFERABILITY | ☒ ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION |
| ☐ USE OF INDUSTRY EXPERTS FOR REVIEW | ☐ CHARGE FOR NEW SUBMISSIONS | |



**2-3
MONTHS**

Average Program
Processing Time
to Approval

**90
DAYS**

Institution
Feedback Period

PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS:

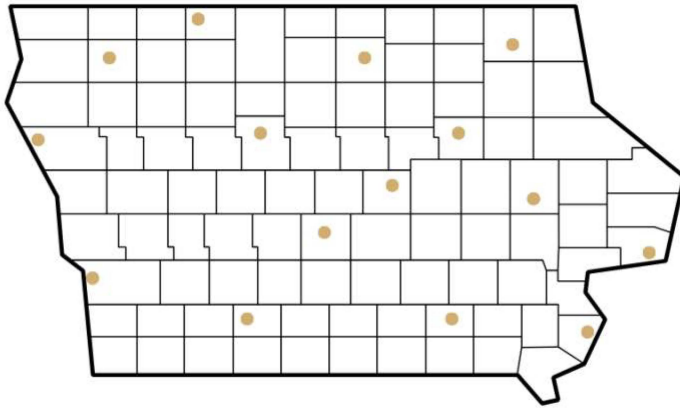
Institutions do independently yearly reviews, and submit data every seven years per an academic program. These typically include: five year enrollment trends, application trends, and labor market outcomes for graduates

Informs
Performance
Based
Funding



STATE APPROACH TO DUPLICATION CONCERNS:

- Largely influenced by workforce needs and mission alignment
- Agency can serve as a mediator and also advocate on the part of the Board of Regents



PUBLIC INSTITUTION COUNT:
Two Year: 15

IOWA

Department of
Higher Education
*Coordinating Board
for Two Year Institutions*
educate.iowa.gov

Iowa Administration Code 281-260C

STATE APPROACH SPOTLIGHT

Iowa Department of Education **utilizes an internal staff of discipline consultants** over each content area to **review content and curriculum** of a new program request.

MOTIVATIONS  Student ROI			 Prevent Unnecessary Duplication	 Institutional Accountability	TECHNOLOGY  State of Iowa Curriculum System (STICS)
--	--	--	--	---	---

REQUIRED COMPONENTS IN NEW PROGRAM APPLICATION:

Notice of Intent, Labor Market Need, Advisory Council for Curriculum, Program Description, Discipline Consultant, Duplications, Labor Market Information, Articulation Agreements, Business & Industry Partners, Program Details, Benchmarks

- ☒ **PROVE WORKFORCE DEMAND**
☒ **TRANSFERABILITY**
☒ **ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION**
☐ **CHARGE FOR NEW SUBMISSIONS**



**2-3
MONTHS**

Average Program
Processing Time
to Approval

**14
DAYS**

Institution
Feedback Period

PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS:

- Colleges do independent evaluation of programs
- The state require each program must be reviewed every 5 years
- During Accreditation visits Iowa DH Reviews their CTE program review process

Informs
Performance
Based
Funding



STATE APPROACH TO DUPLICATION CONCERNS:

Iowa Code 260C.14(1) requires the Department to ascertain that the curriculum being offered by an area school does not duplicate programs provided by existing public or private facilities in the area. If a concern is raised, the Department will work with college administrators to help resolve the issue.

KANSAS

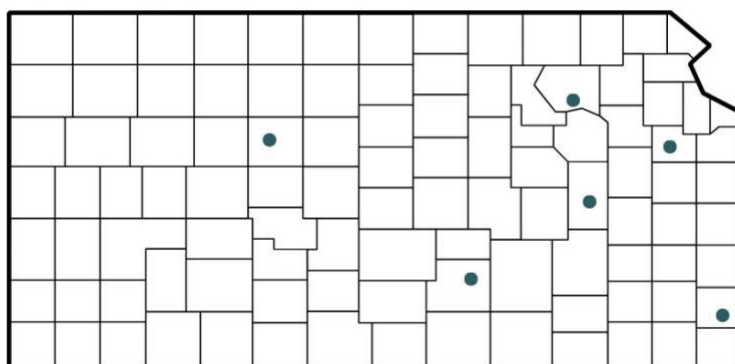
Board of Regents

*Governing Board
for Four Year Institutions*

kansasregents.gov

Kansas Board of Regents Policy

Manual Chpt.2 Section A7



PUBLIC INSTITUTION COUNT:

- Four Year: 6

STATE APPROACH SPOTLIGHT

Kansas utilizes a **Council of Chief Academic Officers (COCAO)** to review agency proofed proposals. This allows a **space for institutions to discuss duplication** concerns frankly and **candidly in a collegial environment**.

MOTIVATIONS					TECHNOLOGY
					
Student ROI	State Statute	Prevent Unnecessary Duplication	Institutional Accountability	Safeguard Tax Payer Funds	PDF Forms > Email

REQUIRED COMPONENTS IN NEW PROGRAM APPLICATION:

Institution, Program Identification (e.g. Degree Level, Title, CIP Code, Modality), Clinical Sites, Justification, Program Demand, Survey of Student Interest, Market Analysis, Projected Enrollment for the Initial Three Years, Employment, Admission and Curriculum, Core Faculty, Expenditures and Funding Sources with Explanations, References

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| ☒ PROVE WORKFORCE DEMAND | ☒ TRANSFERABILITY | ☐ ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION |
| ☐ USE OF INDUSTRY EXPERTS FOR REVIEW | ☐ CHARGE FOR NEW SUBMISSIONS | |



**3-4
MONTHS**

Average Program
Processing Time
to Approval

**45
DAYS**

Institution
Feedback Period

PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS:

Currently in a four year process where all programs will be reviewed on the basis of four quantitative metrics. The KBOR is also currently collecting information on institution's unique program review processes. Chief Academic Officers provide qualitative details.

Informs
Performance
Based
Funding



STATE APPROACH TO DUPLICATION CONCERNS:

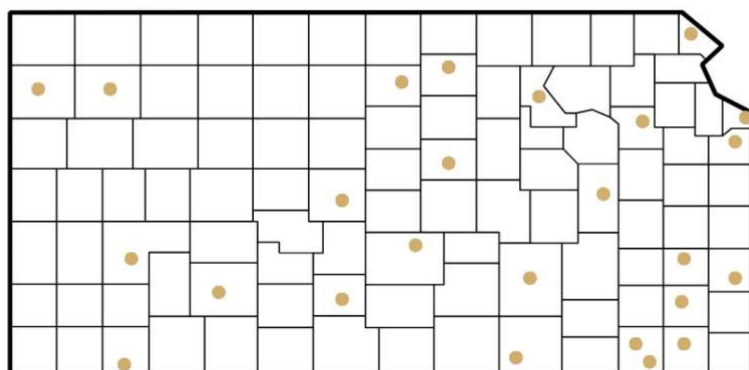
Institutions can often resolve duplication concerns between themselves, in some cases the agency can provide data to aid in the decision making process

KANSAS

Board of Regents

*Coordinating Board
for Public Two Year Institutions*
kansasregents.gov
Kansas Board of Regents Policy

Manual Chpt.3 Section 5



PUBLIC INSTITUTION COUNT:

Two Year: 26

STATE APPROACH SPOTLIGHT

Kansas offers a **video tutorial** offering a step by step walk through on **how to submit a new academic program** proposal. This additional context and explanation has led to **improved quality of submissions**.



MOTIVATIONS



TECHNOLOGY



PDF Forms > Email

REQUIRED COMPONENTS IN NEW TECHNICAL PROGRAM APPLICATIONS:

General Information (Institution, proposed program, Delivery method, CIP code, Standard Occupation Code, Proposed Date, accrediting agency, etc.), Narrative, Explanation of Duplication of Existing Programs, Program Information, Faculty Requirements, Cost and Funding for Proposed Program, Program Review and Assessment, Program Approval at Institutional Level, Program Proposal Submission

- ☒ **PROVE WORKFORCE DEMAND** ☒ **TRANSFERABILITY** ☒ **ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION**
☒ **USE OF INDUSTRY EXPERTS FOR REVIEW** ☐ **CHARGE FOR NEW SUBMISSIONS**



**2-3
MONTHS**

**Average Program
Processing Time
to Approval**

**10
DAYS**

**Institution
Feedback Period**

POST APPROVAL PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS:

Institutions outline their internal review process as part of their new program proposal process, the agency then reviews institutional Kansas Training Information Program (KTIP) data on a three-year rolling basis.

Informs
Performance
Based
Funding



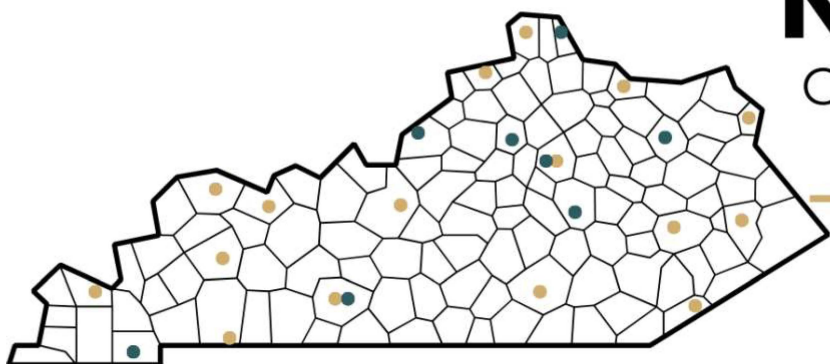
STATE APPROACH TO DUPLICATION CONCERNS:

1. Institutions provide rationale for proposal of duplicative programs
2. Institutions are strongly encouraged to collaborate and in doing so connect with and learn from those with existing programs
3. KBOR can serve in a mediation capacity to allow for communication and perspective sharing if requested
4. This leads to a realized need or lack thereof for a new program

KENTUCKY

Council on Postsecondary
Education

Coordinating Board
cpe.ky.gov



PUBLIC INSTITUTION COUNT:

- Four Year: 8
- Two Year: 16

KRS 164.020 § 15-16

STATE APPROACH SPOTLIGHT

Kentucky CPE hosts a **monthly meeting for program contacts**, or those that are **completing the application process**. This creates a space for them to **recieve updates**, **ask clarifying questions**, and **conect** with other institutions.

MOTIVATIONS				TECHNOLOGY
 Student ROI	 Support Institutions	 State Statute	 Prevent Unnecessary Duplication	 Kentucky Postsecondary Education Data System (KPEDS)

REQUIRED COMPONENTS IN NEW PROGRAM APPLICATION:

Institution, Program Name, Degree Level, Degree Designation, CIP code, Program Type, Proposed Implementation Date, Institutional Contact Information, Date of Governing Board Approval

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ PROVE WORKFORCE DEMAND | ☒ TRANSFERABILITY | ☒ ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION |
| ☐ USE OF INDUSTRY EXPERTS FOR REVIEW | ☐ CHARGE FOR NEW SUBMISSIONS | |



**4-5
MONTHS**

Average Program
Processing Time
to Approval

**30
DAYS**

Institution
Feedback Period

POST APPROVAL PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS:

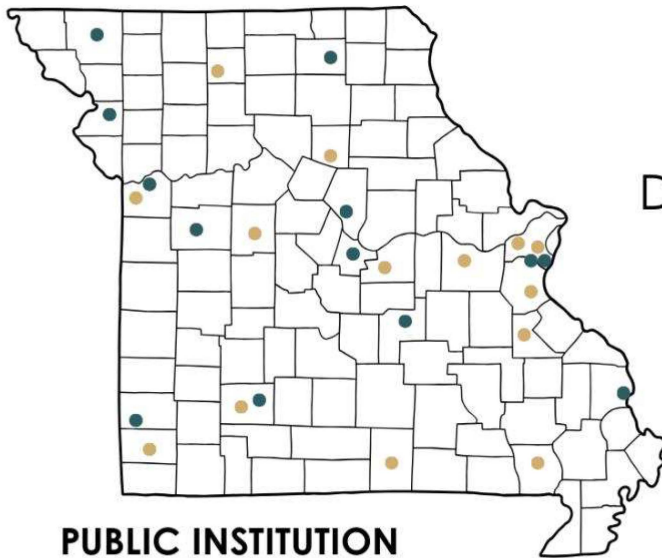
Institutions must review all programs and submit a report with each program classified as either: sunset, fixed, sustain, or grow. CPE reviews these along with student and market demand, data of duplicate programs with declining enrollment will be flagged.

Informs
Performance
Based
Funding



STATE APPROACH TO DUPLICATION CONCERNS:

Duplication that appears in the same service area region must be reviewed and determined to be necessary or unnecessary duplication. Institutions may then have to provide further detail as to how their program differs from currently existing offerings.



PUBLIC INSTITUTION COUNT:

- **FOUR YEAR: 13**
- **TWO YEAR: 14**

MISSOURI

Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development

Coordinating Board
dhewd.mo.gov

Missouri Revised Statutes Chapter 173
Section 173.005.

STATE BEST PRACTICES

There are **three program approval processes** for public institutions. One outlines the practice for **revising an existing program**. The other two **outline the processes** for requesting approval for a **new academic program**.



REQUIRED COMPONENTS IN NEW PROGRAM APPLICATION (ROUTINE REVIEW):

Sponsoring Institution, Program Title, Degree Certificate, Delivery Site, CIP Classification, Implementation Date, Site Location, Collaboration status, Comparable Programs, Certifications, Student Preparation, Faculty Characteristics, Enrollment Projections, Student and Program Outcomes, Program Accrediation, Program Structure, Need/Demand

☐ PROVE WORKFORCE DEMAND

☒ TRANSFERABILITY

☒ ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION

☒ USE OF INDUSTRY EXPERTS FOR REVIEW

☐ CHARGE FOR NEW SUBMISSIONS



**1-7
MONTHS**

Average Program
Processing Time
to Approval

**20
DAYS**

Institution
Feedback Period

POST APPROVAL PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS:

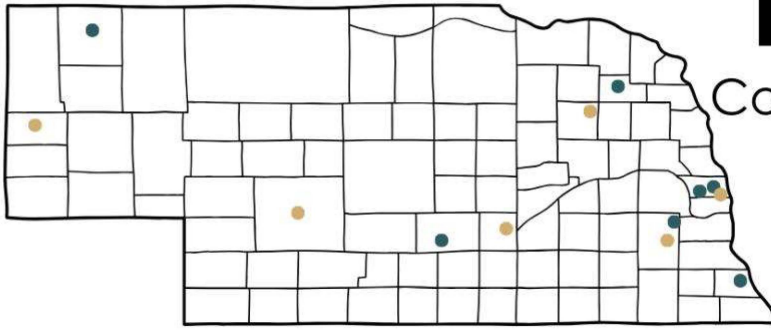
Missouri monitors and reviews existing academic programs with the power of sunseting low performing programs. However, much of the academic program review process is managed by Missouri's institutions.

Informs
Performance
Based
Funding



STATE APPROACH TO DUPLICATION CONCERNS:

- Duplication is "proposing to offer the same or a similar academic program to one that is already being offered by another institution."
- Duplication is generally allowed for new academic programs that are considered general studies or the Liberal Arts and Sciences' or if there is enough student demand present



NEBRASKA

Coordinating Commission for
Postsecondary Education

Coordinating Board
ccpe.nebraska.gov

PUBLIC INSTITUTION COUNT:

- Four Year: 7
- Two Year: 6

Title 281 Chapter 4 EDUCATION

STATE BEST PRACTICES

Nebraska is intentional about **not including technical details** in the **Administrative Code** (e.g. Methods of Delivery, fees, and policies) as to maintain an agile and modern process. The **Administrative code features** required content such as **market need, duplication protocols** and **response times**.

MOTIVATIONS					TECHNOLOGY
					
Student ROI	Support Institutions	Prevent Unnecessary Duplication	Institutional Accountability	Safeguard Tax Payer Funds	PDF Forms> Email

REQUIRED COMPONENTS IN NEW PROGRAM APPLICATION:

Institution Name, Program Name, Degrees, Similar Programs Offered by institution, CIP Code, Administrative Units, Proposed Delivery Site, Date Approved by Governing Board, Proposed Start Date, Credit Hours, Purpose, Relevance to Mission, Need and Demand, Adequacy of Resources (Faculty, Facilities, Budget Projections, Avoidance of Unnecessary Duplication), Alignment with Statewide Plan

- ☒ PROVE WORKFORCE DEMAND
 ☒ TRANSFERABILITY
 ☐ ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION
 ☐ USE OF INDUSTRY EXPERTS FOR REVIEW
 ☐ CHARGE FOR NEW SUBMISSIONS



**3-5
MONTHS**

Average Program
Processing Time
to Approval

**90
DAYS**

Institution
Feedback Period

POST APPROVAL PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS:

Institutions submit a report to CCPE every 7 years on the 5 Year Average of program data, along with a brief statement of need. Any programs not meeting performance standards for Nebraska require a justification as to why that program should be continued. Nebraska offers a form to assist institutions in this, by either highlighting enrollment data, market need, or general education requirements.

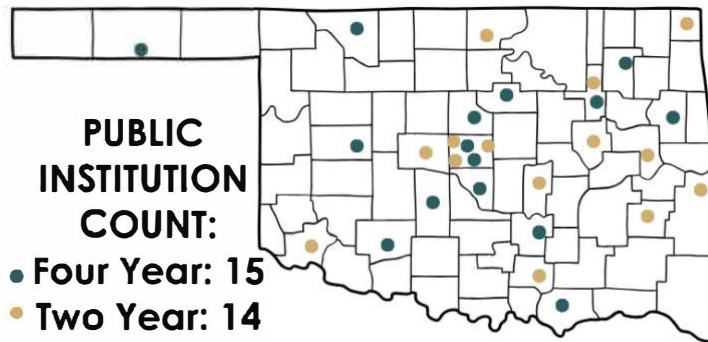
Informs
Performance
Based
Funding



STATE APPROACH TO DUPLICATION CONCERNS:

Nebraska CCPE can aid in discussion and mediation around duplication concerns. Institutions are also permitted to submit a written statement of objection to a duplicate program or speak at a commission meeting. The commissions vote is the final decision.

OKLAHOMA



State Regents
for Higher Education

Coordinating Board
okhighered.org

Chapter 3 Academic Affairs Policy 3.4

STATE APPROACH SPOTLIGHT

Oklahoma recently streamlined their process to **only request information** of new programs that was the **most relevant to their role as a coordinating board**. Their use of **smartsheets** has led to greater **satisfaction amongst institutions** who can **confirm the receipt of application items**.

MOTIVATIONS  Student ROI  Workforce Growth	TECHNOLOGY  Smartsheets
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REQUIRED COMPONENTS IN NEW PROGRAM APPLICATION:

Letter of Intent (LOI): Institution Name, Official Degree Designation, Program Title, Location, Method of Delivery, Contact Information for Chief Academic Officer, Description of Proposed Program, Employment Demand for Program, Unmet Need for Proposed Program

☐ PROVE WORKFORCE DEMAND



TRANSFERABILITY



ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION



USE OF INDUSTRY EXPERTS FOR REVIEW



CHARGE FOR NEW SUBMISSIONS



**2-3
MONTHS**

Average Program
Processing Time
to Approval

**14
DAYS**

Institution
Feedback Period

POST APPROVAL PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS:

New Programs are provisionally approved, to receive full approval programs must have 12 students enrolled and 5 graduates within 3 years. If approved institutions enter a program review cycle that can be every 5 years or align with accreditation calendars.

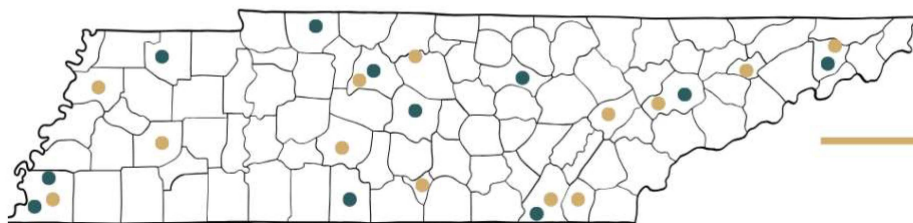
Informs
Performance
Based
Funding



STATE APPROACH TO DUPLICATION CONCERNS:

- **Outlined in Policy:** Institutions can protests a Letter of Intent based on policy defined reasons (e.g. unnecessary duplication)
- Encourage independent discussion between institutions, Agency office can then serve as a mediator if needed
- Can be elevated to Academic Affairs committee for final decision

TENNESSEE



PUBLIC INSTITUTION COUNT:

• Four Year: 11 • Two Year: 13

Higher Education
Commission

Coordinating Board

tn.gov/thec

Academic Policy A1.0

STATE BEST PRACTICES

Prior to Approval, all new programs go through an **external review process with a disciplinary expert**. These experts **review curriculum** and **ensure program quality will meet industry standards**. Experts submit a formal report, institutions then respond to suggestions from the report and elect which to implement

MOTIVATIONS					TECHNOLOGY
					
Student ROI	Support Institutions	Institutional Accountability	Student Consumer Protections	Workforce Growth	Formstack & Leankit

REQUIRED COMPONENTS IN NEW PROGRAM APPLICATION:

Institution, Program Name, Degree Designation, CIP Code, Reviewer Recommendations, Letter of Notification, Implementation Timeline, Student Interest and Community Partnerships, Curriculum, Projected Costs and Revenues for Proposed Program, Institutional Resources, Appendices (Letters of Support, Financial Projections)

- ☒ PROVE WORKFORCE DEMAND
- ☒ TRANSFERABILITY
- ☒ ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION
- ☒ USE OF INDUSTRY EXPERTS FOR REVIEW
- ☐ CHARGE FOR NEW SUBMISSIONS



**4-12
MONTHS**

Average Program
Processing Time
to Approval

**15
DAYS**

Institution
Feedback Period

POST APPROVAL PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS:

Tennessee implemented a new review process that requested institutions to report program data on enrollment and graduation as well as 2 additional criteria they could select from options such as: Student Success, Program Productivity, Work partnerships, etc. Institutions could highlight successes other than enrollment and graduation data. .

Informs
Performance
Based
Funding



STATE APPROACH TO DUPLICATION CONCERNS:

- Institutions submit a list of existing programs as part of new program application, this is confirmed by THEC
- Institutions must then explain the distinguishing factors of their program and respond in full to the concerns of other institutions